Kitab Mahal Series of English Literature.

T. S. ELIOT

Tradition & the Individual Talent
&
MILTON I & II

Text, Notes, Meaning, Explanation, &
Qnestion, Answer

BY
Massood Ali Khan M. A. LL. B.
&
Prof. Bashir Hussain M.A.

Price 3/-

KITAB MAHAL
Educational Publishers
URDU BAZAR, LAHORE (W. Pak.)

Kitab Mahal Series of English Literature.

T. S. ELIOT

Tradition & the Individual Talent

&

MILTON I & II

Text, Notes, Meaning, Explanation, &

Question, Answer

BY

Massood Ali Khan M. A. LL. B.

&

Prof. Bashir Hussain M.A.

Price 3/-

Kitab Mahal

Educational Publishers

URDU BAZAR, LAHORE (W. Pak.)

Published by :
Shakoor Mohammad
Manager : KITAB MAHAL
Urdu Bazar LAHORE.

Printed by :
Mohammad Yaqub at the
Ijaz Printing Press LAHORE.

CONTENTS

TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT

I

In English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence. We cannot refer to 'the tradition' or to 'a tradition'; at most we employ the adjective in saying that the poetry of so-and so is 'traditional' or even 'too traditional'. Seldom, perhaps, does the word appear except in a phrase of censure. If otherwise, it is vaguely approbative, with the implication, as to the work approved, of some pleasing archaeological reconstruction. You can hardly make the word agreeable to English ears without this comfortable reference to the reassuring science of archaeology.

Certainly the word is not likely to appear in our appreciations of living or dead writers. Every nation, every race, has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind; and is even more oblivious of the shortcomings and limitations of its critical habits than of those of its creative genius. We know, or think we know, from the enormous mass of critical writing that has appeared in the French language the critical method or habit of the French; we only conclude (we are such unconscious people) that the French are 'more critical' than we, and sometimes even plume ourselves a little with the fact, as if the French were the less spontaneous. Perhaps they are; but we might remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of critcism. One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he

least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity.

Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should positvely be discouraged. We have seen many such simple currents soon lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historcal sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value

him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.*

In a peculiar sense he will be aware also that he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past. I say judged, not amputated, by them; not judged to be as good as, or worse or better than, the dead; and certainly not judged by the canons of dead critics. It is a judgement, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other. To conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art. And we do not

*Cf. In poetry there is no such thing as complete originality owing nothing to the past. Whenever a Virgil, a Dante, a Shakespeare, a Goethe is born, the whole future of European poetry is altered. When a great poet has lived, certain things have been done once and for all, and cannot be achieved again; but on the other hand, every great poet adds something to the complex material out of which future poetry will be written. *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. [*Editor's note*]

quite say that the new is more valuable because it fits in; but its fitting in is a test of its value—a test, it is true, which can only be slowly and cautiously applied, for we are none of us infallible judges of conforimity. We say: it appears to conform, and is perhaps indvidual, or it appears individual, and may conform; but we are hardly likely to find that it is one and not the other.

To proceed to a more intelligible exposition of the relation of the poet to the past: he can neither take the past as a lump; an indiscriminate bolus, nor can he form himself wholly on one or two private admirations, nor can he form himself wholly upon one preferred period. The first course is inadmissible, the second is an important experience of youth, and the third is a pleasant and highly desirable supplement. The poet must be very conscious of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations. He must be quite aware of the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same. He must be aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind—is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen. That this development, refinement perhaps, complication certainly, is not, from the point of view of the artist, any improvement. Perhaps not even an improvement from the point of view of the psychologist or not to the extent which we imagine; perhaps only in the end based upon a complication in economics and machinery. But the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the pas‘'s awareness of itself cannot show.

Someone said: 'The dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know.

I am alive to a usual objection to what is clearly part of my programme for the *metier* of poetry. The objection is that the doctrine requires a ridiculous amount of erudition (pendantry), a claim which can be rejected by appeal to the lives of poets in any pantheon. It will even be affirmed that much learning deadens or perverts poetic sensibility. While, however, we persist in believing that a poet ought to know as much as will not encroach upon his necessary receptivity and necessary laziness, it is not desirable to confine knowledge to whatever can be put into a useful shape for examinations, drawingrooms, or the still more pretentious modes of publicity. Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it. Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum. What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I therefore invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.

II

Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry. If we attend to the confused cries of the newspaper critics and the susurrus of popular repetition that follows, we shall hear the names of poets in great numbers; if we seek not Blue-

book knowledge but the enjoyment of poetry, and ask for a poem, we shall seldom find it. I have tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written The other aspect of this Impersonal theory of poetry is the relation of the poem to its author. And I hinted, by an analogy, that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of 'personality', not being necessarily more interesting, or having 'more to say', but rather by being a more finaly perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected: has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.

The experience, you will notice, the elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst, are of two kinds: emotions and feelings. The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases or images, may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings solely. Canto XV of the

Inferno (Brunetto Latini) is a working up of the emotion evident in the situation; but the effect, though single as that of any work of art, is obtained by considerable complexity of detail. The last quatrain gives an image, a feeling attaching to an image, which 'came,' which did not develop simply out of what precedes, but which was probably in suspension in the poet's mind until the proper combination arrived for it to add itself to. The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.

If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of type of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark. For it is not the 'greatness', the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak under which the fusion takes place, that counts. The episode of Paolo and Francesca employs definite emotion, but the intensity of the poetry is something quite different from whatever intensity in the supposed experience it may give the impression of. It is no more intense, furthermore, than Canto XXVI, the voyage of Ulysses, which has not the direct dependence upon an emotion. Great variety is possible in the process of transmutation of emotion : the murder of Agamemnon, or the agony of Othello, gives an artistic effect apparently closer to a possible original than the scenes from Dante. In the *Agamemnon*, the artistic emotion approximates to the emotion of an actual spectator in *Othello* to the emotion of the protagonist himself. But the difference between art and the event is always absolute; the combination which is the murder of Agamemnon is probably as complex as that which is the voyage of Ulysses. In either case there has been a fusion of elements. The ode of Keats contains a number of feelings which have nothing particular to do with the nightingale, but which the nighingale, partly perhaps because of its attractive name, and partly because of its reputation, served to bring together.

The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul : for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality.

I will quote a passage which is unfamiliar enough to be regarded with fresh attention in the light—or darkness—of these observation :

And now methinks I could e'en chide myself
For doating on her beauty, though her death
Shall be revenged after no common action.
Does the silkworm expend her yellow labours
For thee ? For thee does she undo herself ?
Are lordships sold to maintain ladyships
For the poor benefit of a bewildering minute ?
Why does yon fellow falsify highways,
And put his life between the judge's lips,
To refine such a thing—keeps horse and men
To beat their valours for her

In this passage (as is evident if it is taken in its context) there is a combination of positive and negative emotions : an intensely strong attraction toward beanty and an equally intense fascination by the ugliness which is contrasted with it and which destroys it. This balance of contrasted emotion is in the dramatic situation to which the speech is pertinent, but that situation alone is inadequate to it. This is, so to speak, the structural emotion, provided by the drama. But the whole effect, the dominant tone, is due to the fact that a number of floating feelings, having an affinity to this emotion by no means superficially evident, have combined with it to give us a new art emotion.

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. The emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life. One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him. Consequently, we must believe that 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' is an inexact formula. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquility. It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation. These experiences are not 'recollected,' and they finally unite in an atmosphere which is 'tranquil only in that it is a passive attending upon the event. Of course this is not quite the whole story. There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate. In fact, the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him 'personal'. Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.

III

This essay proposes to halt at the frontier of metaphysics or mysticism, and confine itself to such practical conclusions as can be applied by the responsible person interested in poetry. To divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim: for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry, good and bad. There are many people who appreciate the expression of sincere emotion in verse, and there is a smaller number of people who can appreciate technical excellence. But very few know when there is an expression of *significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

[1919]

TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALNET

(*By T. S. Eliot*)

SUMMARY

I

Criticism is Indispensible.

The word "*Tradition*" is seldom used in English writing: at most its adjective form "Traditional" is employed in saying that the poetry of so-and so is "Traditonal", and that too in a phrase implying censure. But if used in an approbative sense it is rather vague implying that the work approved pleasantly reminds one of the ancient works of art.

The English nation like all other nations has not only its own creative but also critical turn of mind, but it is more conscious of its creative power than critical, and seeing the great volume of French critical literature concludes that the French are "more critical"and less inventive. But it should not be forgotten that criticism is as indispensible as breathing ; it is natural. When an Englishman praises a poet he insists on those aspects of his work in which the poet does not resemble any one else, and herein his *individuality* is supposed to lie. On the other hand if he were to approach the poet without this prejudice he would find that the best and most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets too have made their immortal contribution.

Poetry and Tradition.

If tradition means that we are to follow blindly what is handed down from our ancestors then it must be discouraged. Tradition cannot be inherited, it can be

obtained by great labour. It involves the historical sense which involves a perception of the past inseparably connected with the present, and so the entire literature of Europe from the earliest period has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense marks a writer traditional.

No poet and no artist is complete in himself. He cannot be valued in isolation, but in contrast and comparison with the dead ones to whom he owes much. The existing masterpiece of literature or art form an ideal order among themselves, but when a new work appears the existing order, though complete in itself, is modified and altered, if ever so slightly, and so the relations, proportions, values of each work are readjusted, to bring a conformity between the old and the new. It is natural that the past be altered by the present as the present is influenced by past. The poet or artist will himself be conscious of the fact that he will have to be judged by the standards of the past ; though not by the canons of the dead critics. It is only a comparison between two things ; a test to see how it fits in with the rest and conforms with the existing standard. This test has to be slowly and consciously applied, because no one can be an infallible judge of conformity.

Though the poet cannot detach himself from the past, he cannot take the past as a lump, nor a few individual admirable works nor any particular period. He must be conscious of the main current. He must be aware of the fact that art does not improve, but the material of art is not quite the same, and that the mind of a nation—a mind more important than his own—is a mind which changes and develops, but does not discard any thing Thus Shakespeare and Homer are never out of date. In fact the conscious present is more aware of the fact than the past was aware of itself.

Consciousness of the Past Essential

It is not necessary that the poet should have a ridiculous amount of erudition which may encroach upon his

necessary receptivity, nor should be confine knowledge to whatever can be put into a useful shape. Shakespeare acquired much essential knowledge without being erudite. What is necessary is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and should always continue to develop it. He will have to merge his personality in the art if he wants to progress. This depersonalization makes the art approach the condition of science.

II

Impersonal Theory of Poetry

In criticising or appreciating poetry we concentrate our attention on the poetry and not the poet. The other aspect of the impersonal theory of poetry is the relation of the poem to its author. The mind of the nature poet differs from that of the immature one is being more finely perfected medium in which special or very varied feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations. The analogy of oxygen and sulphur dioxide with a filament of platinum and help in explaining the point. The two gases mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum form sulphuric acid, without affecting platinum in any way, although the presence of platinum was the chief cause of this gas. In the same way the mind of the poet which operates upon the experience of the man himself, will, like platinum, be unaffected, and at the same time will digest and transmute passions.

Emotions and Feelings.

The elements on which the mind of the poet works are emotions and feelings, used in an artistic manner to give greater effect. The work may be formed of one emotion, or may be a combination of several ; and various feelings, or images may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion, composed out of feelings solely. The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up

numberless feelings, phrases, images which remain there until they can be united to form a new compound.

In the greatest poetry there is a great variety of types of combination arranged in perfect order. It is not the "greatness", the intensity of emotions, but the intensity of the artistic process that counts. The murder of Agamemnon or the agony of Othello gives an artistic effect apparently closer to a possible original than the scenes from Dante. In the Agamemnon, the artistic emotion approximates to the emotion of an actual spectator ; in Othello to the emotion of the protagonist (chief character) himself. What the author is driving at is, that the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.

Sometimes there is a combination of positive and negative emotions (as shown in the passage quoted from a play), where an intensely strong attraction toward beauty is contrasted with an equally intense fascination by the ugliness destroying the effect. This balance of contrasted emotion is based on the dramatic situation, which alone is inadiquate but the whole effect, owing to many feelings not apparently related to the emotion being combined, gives a new art emotion.

One error which a poet may fall into is to seek new human emotions and a search for novelty in the wrong place leads him to absurdity. It is not the business of the poet to find new emotions. He should use the ordinary ones and in using them to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. He can use emotions which he has not experienced as well as those which are familiar to him. There is no such thing as "emotion recollected in tranquility." It is neither emotion nor recollection nor even tranquility. It is a concentration of a very great number of experiences, and this concentration does not happen consciously or of deliberation. The poet while writing poetry must be conscious and deliberate. A bad poet is unconscious where he ought to be conscious and

where he ought to be unconscious. Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion ; not the expression of personality but an escape from personality.

III

Practical Conclusions.

Interest would be diverted from the poet to the poetry for then poetry can be better estimated. There are many people who appreciate emotion in verse but very few who can appreciate technical beauty, and still fewer who know that there is an expression of *significant* emotion whose beauty lies in the poem and not in life of the poet. The poet has got to become impersonal by merging his self in his work. He must be conscious of not only the present but also of the past which has influenced the present.

Notes and Explanations

I

Tradition - the handing down of opinions or practices to posterity unwritten ; a belief or practice thus handed down. *Talent*—faculty ; special aptitude ; eminent ability. *Seldom, perhaps,......censure*—the word "traditional", wherever it is used, is used in a disapproving sense. *Vaguely approbative*—used in a vague manner to praise a thing. *Implication*—implied sense. *Archaeological*—relating to archaeology, a knowledge of ancient art, customs etc. ; the science which deduces a knowledge of past times from the study of their existing remains. *If otherwise, it is vaguely......reconstruction*—If, however, the word "traditional" is used in the good sense of praising something, then it is used in a vague manner with an implied and not too flattering a sense, that the thing pleasantly reminds one of the ancient works of art. *Appreciation*—the act of setting a value on a work of literature or art.

Oblivious—prove to forget; unaware; ignorant. *Enormous of critical writing*—great volume of critical literature.

Plume ourselves— boast : flatter ourselves. *Spontaneours* of one's free will: producing at will. *Inevitable*—indispensible. *Articulating*—speaking distinctly. *Perhaps they* are *but...............Criticism*— It may be that the French are less inclined to use their creative faculty; but we must not forget that criticism is as indispensible as breathing. We breath because breathing is a biological necessity. Similarly when we read a new book and are impressed by it, there can be no harm if we speak out what we feel about it and try to find out how far our estimate of the book is correct in the light of the critical literature of the French. *Tendency*— inelination. *Isolated*— singled out. *We dwell with satisfaction..................vigorously*— we pay greater attention and derive much pleasure from those aspects of a poet's work where he does not resemble the dead poets, especially those who have died in the recent past. We try to single out such differing aspects and enjoy them the more thinking them to be the result of his individual skill. This is not the correct approach. If we give up this habit and examine disinterestedly the apparently individual as well as the best parts of the poet's works, we shall find that they are not very different from the works of the dead poets who too have worked on the same lines and achieved immortal fame. *Adolescence*—the period of youth, in man from 14 to 25, in woman from 12 to 21. *Full maturity*—when the powers of the body and mind are fully developed. *Adherence*—sticking fast to. *Positively*— definitely. *We have seen .... sand*— We have seen that such traditions have very soon disappeared. *Wider significance*—wider meaning. *Involves* —includes. *The historical sense......................... presence* — The historical sense includes amongst other things an awareness that not only the past is past but that it is still with us in the form of the influence it has left behind.

Not merely with his own generation in his bones— not confining himself to what is written in his own time. *From Homer and within*—from the time of Homer up to this time. *This historical sense ......traditional* — This historical sense implies that literature has a deual aspcet, a

temporal *i.e.* pertaining to a period, and a timeless, *i.e.* without any limit of time, and when a poet is conscious of this fact he is said to be traditional because his work is not detached from the past but is a continuance of it.

No poet, no artist......................alone—The work of a poet or an artist cannot be properly appreciated without reference to the works of the poets and artists who have preceded him. *His significance................artists*—The importance of a poet or an artist and the estimate of his work depend on the relation they bear with the work of the poets and artists of the past. *Aesthetic*—relating to the principles of taste and art. *As a principle........... ....criticism*—as a principle for the development of a true taste in appreciating poetry and art and not a mere historical survey. *Conform*—to adapt; to obey; to comply. *Cohere*—to stick together ; to be consystent. *Simultaneously*—happening at the same time. *The existing monuments*—the existing masterpieces of art or literature. *Modified*—altered slightly. *Supervention*—coming in existence : arrival. *Novelty*—new work. *Preposterous*—wrong; absurd; foolish. *And this is...........the new*—when it is said that there should be consistency between the old and new order, what is actually meant is, that the old order being complete before some new work appeared, a necessary modification, however little, becomes unavoidable on the appearance of a new work and therfore all relations, proportions and values of each work with reference to the whole have to adjusted again.

Inevitably—necessarily; irresistibly. *Amputate*—cut-off a limb etc. *Canons*—rules; criterion; standered. *I say judged, not amputated*—When I say that a poet will have to be judged I only mean that his work will be seen with a critical eye but not so harshly as to cut away a portion of his work and throw it away. *To conform would be...... art*—If a new work exactly corresponds with an old one, then it is only a copy of the latter and cannot be said to conform and so cannot be called a new work of art either. *Infallible*—not capable of error. *Intelligent exposition*—a

clear and reasonable explanation. *As a lump*—the whole at a time. *Indiscriminate*—without distinguishing the good from the bad. *Bolus*—a rounded mass of any thing, a large pill. *Form*—mould; train; instruct. *Inadmissible*—that cannot be admitted or allowed. *The first course is in admissible......supplement*—The first course, of taking the entire literature of the past, is not possible, the second, of selecting 'some masterpieces according to one's taste, is what young men usully do, and the third, of selecting the literature of one particular period is useful and is a source of supplementing one's knowledge. *Supplement*—thing added to supply deficiencies. *Most distinguished reputations*—most eminent writers or their works. *En route*—on the way to (or for). *Superennuate* to impair or disqualify by living beyond the years of service or by old age; to become out of date. *Magdalenian*—of the (latest) palaeolithic period (stone age) represented by remains found at La Magdeleine, France. *Psychologist*—one versed in psychology, science which classifies and analyses the phenomena of varied states of the human mind.

"The dead writers..................did"—The present day writers are more advanced than the dead writers, because the former know much more than the later did. It is natural, because all the knowledge which the preceding generations possessed is treasured in the books they wrote which are easily available to the following generations, besides the later additions to knowledge. *Metier*—one's trade, profession or line. *Erudition*—vast learning. *Pedantry*—vain display of learning. *Phantheon*—temple dedicated to all the gods especially the circular one at Rome; all the gods of a nation's considered as one body. *The doctrine requires...... pantheon*-The objection is that the doctrine that the modern poet should have all the accumulated knowledge of the past implies that he must be a man of vast learning, but this fact is disproved when we read the lives of poets of any nation. *Perverts*—turns wrong or from the right course. *Much learning..................sensibility*—too much learning is sometimes a source of confusion and leads the mind of a poet away from the right course. *Encroach*—

intrude; trespass. *Pretentions*—presumptions; arrogant; claiming more than is warranted. *Tardy*—slow-moving; sluggish. *Must sweat for it*—must work hard to get it. *Plutarch*—(50—120 A. D.) a famous writer of biography. His biographies are one of the most famous works of literature. *The progress of an artist............personality* An artist cannot progress unless he develops his art for the sake of art and disregards his own personal inclinations and merges his personality in the art. *Depersonatization*—taking away the characteristics that constitute the personality. *Analogy*—similarity; reasoning from parallel cases. —*The action.......................dioxide—i.e.* when a bit of filiated platinum is introduced into a Chamber containing oxygeon and sulphur dioxide the result is sulphurous acid. *Finely filiated*—turned into fine films. *Platinum*—a noble metal of steel grey colour, exceedingly valuable, malleable and ductile, very heavy and infusible. *Dioxide*—an oxide (a compound of oxygen and some other element) containing two equivalents of oxygen to one of a metal.

II

Susurrus—whispering; rustling.

Blue-book—a report or other paper printed by parliament, because usually stitched up in blue paper wrappers. *Blue-book knowledge*—knowledge based on the opinions of others. *Conception*—idea. *Mature*—fully developed. *Immature*—not fully developed. *Medium*—any intervening means: instrument ; agency. *Catalyst*—an agent in catalysis, which (in chemistry) means the effect produced by a substance that without undergoing change itself aids a chemical change in other bodies. *Filament*—a slender or thread like object; a fibre. *Inert*—inactive. *Shred*—a torn out fibre. *Transmute*—change the form, nature or substance. *The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum..... ....material*—The author has explained his point with the help of the analogy of the catalyst. When two gases —oxygen and sulphur dioxide—are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they result in forming sulphu-

rous acid. In this process the platinum played an important part because without it the combination would not be possible. Still the platinum is apparently unaffected. In the same way the mind of the poet operates on feelings and emotions and if the mind is more developed it will not be affected by them but will arrange them in order and where necessary change their form and present them in an attractive manner. *Inhering*—remaining firm in ; existing in. *Inferno*—a famous poetical work of Dante, the greatest Italian poet. *Canto*—a division of a long poem. *Working up*—elaborating description ; advancing gradually to a climax. *By considerable complexity of detail*—by elaborately describing the situation in great-detail and making it complicated.

Quatrain—a stanza of four lines. *Image*—picture. *In suspension*—in an state of inaction. *Particles*—small parts. *Representative passages*—important passages which give a correct idea of the value of the work. *Semi-ethical*—not fully conforming with the recognized standard. *Sublimity*—loftiness of thought or style. *And also how completely......mark*—you will also find that when a poet indulges in loftiness of thought, which does not fully conform with the recognized standard, his attempt is a failure. *Fusion*—act of melting ; a close union of things as if melted together. *Components*—elements forming compound. *For it is not the "greatness"...........that counts*—The beauty of a poem does not lie merely in the emotions expressed being great and intense but in the skilful, artistic and forceful manner in which they are arranged and united together in an attractive form. *Episode*—a story in itroduced into a narrative or poem to give variety. *Canto* XXVI—*i.e.* Canto XXVI of *Inferno* . *Ulysses*—Ulysses, or as the Greeks called him, Odysseus, was king of Ithaca; a small rocky island—lying on the west of Greece. He was the craftiest of all the Greeks who joined the Trojan War, and has been called the man of many wiles". He contrived the strategem of the wooden horse by which Troy was taken after a long seige. After the capture of the city he wandered for ten years and met with thrilling adventures. By the advice of Circe he

sailed to"boundary of the world, the deep-flowing Ocean". This voyage has been described by Dante in his "*Inferno*"- "In Canto XXVI Dante describes his meeting with Ulysses and Diomed among the Counsellors of Evil in the Eighth Circle of Hell......" *Agamemnon*—the Grecian General in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, a play based on Greek mythology, in which Ulysses, Diomed and Achilles have also taken part. *Othelo*—Othello, the chief character in Shakespeare's play (tragedy) *Othello*, in which he kills his beloved wife Desdemona from jealousy and then kills himself. *Closer to............Dante*—In Shakespeare's play the scenes relating to the murder of Agamemnon or the agony of Othello on having killed his wife are more real and lifelike than the scenes in Dante's *Inferno*. *Dante*—Alighieri Dante (1265—1321), the greatest of Italian poets, whose"La Divina Commedia" is world famous and has been translated into all languages of Europe. *Protagonist*—chief character in a drama. *Keats*—John Keats (1795—1821) the great English poet, who, though dying at the early age of twenty-five, produced a number of poems which in richness of imagination and beauty of thought are not excelled by anything in the language. *The ode of Keats*—*i.e.* the *Ode to the Nightingale*. *Metaphysical*—relating to metaphysics, the science which investigates the first principle of nature and thought. *The metaphysical.........soul*—the philosophical theory that there is a unity in all individual souls as all are merged in one great soul, the universal soul.

Chide—reproach. *Doating*—same as doting, being madly in love with. *After no common action*—a very strong action will be taken. *Does the silkworm..............herself?* Does the silkworm toil from morning to evening to produce silk for thy robes ; and does she destory herself for thee ? *Why does you fellow..............lips*—Why does that fellow commit crimes on the high-roads and make them unsafe, and render himself liable to the punishment of death by the judge. *To refine... ....her ?* In order that it may appear more imposing he employs men and horses in his adventures to baffle those courageous men who want to oppose him, to rescue some body kidnapped. *Fascination*—

charm. *Pertinent*—to the point; suitable. *Is in the dramatic situation*—is demanded by the peculiar situation of the moment. *Structural emotion*—emotien based on the artistic situation created by the dramatist. *Dominant*—prevailing; governing. *Affinity*—nearness of kin ; agreement or resemblance. *Crude*—undeveloped. *Flat*—dull ; insipid. *Eccentricity*—singularity of conduct ; oddness.

In this search for novelty.........perverse—In this attempt to search for new emotions a poet is led to absurdity. *Distortion*—twisting. *Of deliberation*—at will. *These experiences.........event*—These experiences cannot be readily recalled to the mind ; they remain dormant and passive and when they find an atmosphere which is "tranquil" they combine and make appearance. *Poetry is not ....emotion*—A poet cannot allow his emotions to run wild, he must get away from them.

III

Mysticism—obscurity of doctrine. *Laudable*—praiseworthy. *Conduce to*—to contribute ; to tend to some end.

Emotion which..............poet—emotion which is attractive in itself and not because of the personality of the poet. *Without surrendering.........done*—without merging his personality in the work.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q 1. How does tradition influence individual talent ?

Ans. An average Englishman does not believe in tradition; that is why in English writing the word seldom occurs except in its adjectival form "traditional". And even that is used often in a phrase of censure or at best in vague approbation. "Tradition" can be used in a narrow or a wide sense In a narrow sense it means the handing down from ancestors of certain customs and habits and blindly following them. In this sense it is not acceptible because it leads to failure. In the wider sense "tradition" involves all the habitual actions, habits, and customs from the most significant religious rite to most ordinary affairs, not only of our time but also of the past. As such it can not be inherited, but has to be acquired with much effort. It also involves the historical sense, and the historical sense involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past but of its presence *i.e.* its influence on the present. The historical sense compels a poet to think that all the literature of all countries, of all times is but one whole and therefore the literature of the past cannot be ignored. It is in relation with the past that an artist or a poet can be conscious of his place in his time.

No poet or artist can be said to be complete in himself, *i.e.* independent of the literature or art of the past, His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. He can not be valued alone, but is set for contrast and comparison with them. He has got to conform and to cohere with the existing order which owes much to the endeavours of the dead poets and artists. In poetry there is no such thing as complete originality owing nothing to the past. Whenever a great poet like Dante,

Shakespeare or Goethe is borne the whole future of (European) poetry is altered. A great poet in his life does certain things which cannot be achieved again, and thus leaves an indelible mark for the future. Therefore, a poet of today will have to be judged by the standards of the past to see how far he conforms with the established standard, The poet will therefore have to develop the consciousness of the past and in doing so he will be influenced by what the poets of the past have left behind. This is the influence of tradition.

Q. 2. Explain the analogy "of the calalyst" and how it is applied to the mind of a poet.

Ans. In order to define the process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition, T.S. Eliot has used a suggestive analogy, *viz* the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide. He says that when the two gases are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum they form sulphureous acid. This result is made possible by the presence of the platinum ; if it is not there it will not follow. But though platinum is the immediate cause of producing the result it is not affected in any way. The mind of the poet is like a shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate the experience of the man himself ; but if the poet has a perfectly developed mind, it will remain aloof from the emotions and fellings. It will digest and transmute the passions on which it works. The elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst *i.e.* the mind, are emotions and feelings and these are stored in the poet's mind with phrases and images. They lie inactive until all the particles which can unite and form a new compound get the necessary atmosphere to produce the desired result.

Q. 3. "........we might remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing." Explain and elucidate, showing on what lines should criticism proceed.

Ans. Criticism is a correct appreciation of an object,

an attempt to discover its good and bad qualities. As such it is a natural function of our mind. When see a thing—a picture, a scenery, a game—or read a book, we are naturally affected by it. We form an opinion about it as to whether it is good, bad or indifferent and then go a step further and give our reasons for holding such an opinion. This is criticism. In doing so we have in our mind a certain standard by which to judge. This depends upon the taste, intellegence, education etc. of the individual. But in any case it is there and we cannot ignore it though we may be, for a time, unconscious of its existence, just as we breathe but are for the most part of our lives unaware of it. Now the standard which we set in our mind is necessarily personal ; it may or may not be accepted by others. When we read a book and feel an emotion about it, we express what passes in our mind and try to ascertain whether we are right or not. This is as natural as we breathe.

Now the second thing is that our criticism shoud be such as can be shared by others also and should proceed on right lines. One initial error that we ordinarily commit is that when we compare a poet with others we often select those features in which he differs from the preceding poets. This is not the correct method. If we approach a poet without such a prejudged opinion we shall find that not only the best but the most individual parts of his work may be those wherein the dead poets have made themselves immortal. We should also take care that we do not blindly follow tradition in its narrow sense of what has been done or believed by our ancestors. This tendency should be discouraged. Tradition in its wider sense is a thing which cannot be inherited. It is acquired with much labour and involves the historical sense which in its turn involves a perception of the past as it has influenced the present. In this way while criticising a poet we shall have to keep in mind all the poets of the past and the entire literature of Europe. Then our criticism will proceed on right lines. No poet or artist can be correctly appreciated in isolation. We cannot value him alone ; we have to set him for contrast and comparison with all the preceding poets.

MILTON I

While it must be admitted that Milton is a very great poet indeed, it is something of a puzzle to decide in what his greatness consists. On analysis, the marks against him appear both more numerous and more significant than the marks to his credit. As a man, he is antipathetic. Either from the moralist's point of view, or from the theologian's point of view, or from the psychologist's point of view, or from that of the political philosopher, or judging by the ordinary standards of likeableness in human beings, Milton is unsatisfactory. The doubts which I have to express about him are more serious than these. His greatness as a poet has been sufficiently celebrated, though I think largely for the wrong reasons, and without the proper reservations. His misdeeds as a poet has been called attention to, as by Mt Ezra Pound, but usually in passing. What seems to me necessary is to assert at the same time his greatness—in that what he could do well he did better than anyone else has ever done—and the serious charges to be made against him, in respect of the deterioration—the peculiar kind of deterioration—to which he subjected the language.

Many people will agree that a man may be a great artist, and yet have a bad influence. There is more of Milton's influence in the badness of the bad verse of the eighteenth century than of anybody's else : he certainly did more harm than Dryden and Pope, and perhaps a good deal of the obloquy which has fallen on these two poets, especially the latter, because of their influence, ought to be transferred to Milton. But to put the matter simply in terms of 'bad influence' is not necessarily to bring a serious charge : because a good deal of the responsibility, when we state the problem in these terms,

may devolve on the eighteenth-century poets themselves for being such bad poets that they were incapable of being influenced except for ill. There is a good deal more to the charge against Milton than this; and it appears a good deal more serious if we affirm that Milton's poetry could *only* be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatever. It is more serious, also, if we affirm that Milton's bad influence may be traced much farther than the eighteenth century, and much farther than upon bad poets : if we say that it was an influence against which we still have to struggle.

There is a large class of persons, including some who appear in print as critics, who regard any censure upon a great 'poet' as a breach of the peace, as an act of wanton iconoclasm, or even hoodlumism. The kind of derogatory criticism that I have to make upon Milton is not intended for such persons, who cannot understand that it is more important, in some vital respects, to be a *good* poet than to be a *great* poet; and of what I have to say I consider that the only jury of judgement is that of the ablest poetical practitioners of my own time.

The most impotant fact about Milton; for my purpose, is his blindness. I do not mean that to go blind in middle life is itself enough to determine the whole nature of a man's poetry. Blindness must be considered in conjunction with Milton's personality and character, and the peculiar education which he received. It must also be considered in connexion with his devotion to, and expertness in the art of music. Had Milton been a man of very keen senses—I mean of *all* the five senses—his blindness would not have mattered so much. But for a man whose sensuousness, such as it was, had been withered early by book-learning, and whose gifts were naturally aural, it mattered a great deal. It would seem, indeed, to have helped him to concentrate on what he could do best.

At no period is the visual imagination conspicuous in Milton's poetry. It would be as well to have a few illust-

rations of what I mean by visual imagination. From *Macbeth*:

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve
By his loved mansionry that the heavens' breath
Smells wooingly here : no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed
The air is delicate.

It may be observed that such an image, as well as another familiar quotation from a little later in the same play,

Light thickens, and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood,

not only offer something to the eye, but, so to speak, to the common sense. I mean that they convey the feeling of being in a particular place at a particular time. The comparison with Shakespeare offers another indication of the peculiarity of Milton. With Shakespeare, far more than with any other poet in English, the combinations of words offer perpetual novelty; they enlarge the meaning of the individual words joined : thus 'procreant cradle', 'rooky wood'. In comparison, Milton's images do not give this sense of particularity, nor are the separate words developed in significance. His language is, if one may use the term without disparagement, *artificial* and *conventional*.

O'er the smooth enamel'd green...
...paths of this drear wood
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger.

('Shady brow' here is a diminution of the value of the two words from their use in the line from *Dr Faustus*

Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows.)

The imagery in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* is all general:

While the ploughman near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale,
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

It is not a particular ploughman, milkmaid and shepherd that Milton sees (as Wordsworth might see them); the sensuous effect of these verses is entirely on the ear, and is joined to the concepts of ploughman, milkmaid, and shepherd. Even in his most mature work, Milton does not infuse new life into the word, as Shakespeare does.

The sun to me is dark
And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.

Here *interlunar* is certainly a stroke of genius, but is merely combined with 'vacant', and 'cave' rather than giving and receiving life from them. Thus it is not so unfair, as it might at first appear, to say that Milton writes English like a dead language. The criticism has been made with regard to his involved syntax. But a tortuous style, when its peculiarity is aimed at precision (as with Henry James), is not necessarily a dead one; only when the complication is dictated by a demand of verbal music, instead of by any demand of sense.

Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers,
If these magnific titles yet remain
Not merely titular, since by decree
Another now hath to himself engrossed

All power, and us eclipsed under the name
Of King anointed, for whom all this haste
Of midnight march, and hurried meeting here,
This only to consult how we may best
With what may be devised of honours new
Receive him coming to receive from us
Knee-tribute yet unpaid, prostration vile,
Too much to one, but double how endured,
To one and to his image now proclaimed?

With which compare :

However, he didn't mind thinking that if Cissy should prove all that was likely enough their having a subject in common couldn't but practically conduce; though the moral of it all amounted rather to a portent, the one that Houghty, by the same token, had done least to reasure him against, of the extent to which the native jungle harboured the female specimen and to which its ostensible cover, the vast level of mixed growths stirred wavigly in whatever breeze, was apt to be identifiable but as an agitation of the latest redundant thing in ladies' hats.

This quotation, taken almost at random from *The Ivory Tower*, is not intended to represent Henry James at hypothetical 'best' any more than the noble passage from *Paradise Lost* is meant to be Milton's hypothetical worst. The question is the difference of intention, in the elaboration of styles both of which depart so far from lucid simplicity. The sound, of course, is never irrelevant, and the style of James certainly depends for its effect a good deal on the sound of a voice, Jame's own, painfully explaining. But the complication, with James, is due to a determination not to simplify, and in that simplification lose any of the real intricacies and by-paths of mental movement; whereas the complication of a Miltonic sentence is an active complication, a complication deliberately introduced into what was a previously simplified and abstract thought. The dark angel here is not *thinking* or conversing, but

making a speech carefully prepared for him; and the arrangement is for the sake of musical value, not for significance. A straightforward utterance, as of a Homeric or Dantesque character, would make the speaker very much more real to us; but reality is no part of the intention. We have in fact to read such a passage not analytically, to get the poetic impression. I am not suggesting that Milton has no idea to convey, which he regards as important : only that the syntax is determined by the musical significance, by the auditory imagination, rather than by the attempt to follow actual speech or thought. It is at least more nearly possible to distinguish the pleasure which arises from the *noise*, from the pleasure due to other elements, than with the verse of Shakespeare, in which the auditory imagination and the imagination of the other senses are more nearly fused, and fused together with the thought. The result with Milton is, in one sense of the word, *rhetoric*. That term is not intended to be derogatory. This kind of 'rhetoric' is not necessarily bad in its influence ; and it may be considered bad in relation to the historical life of a language as a whole. I have said elsewhere that the living English which was Shakespeare's became split up into two components one of which was exploited by Milton and the other by Dryden. Of the two, I still think Dryden's development the healthier, because it was Dryden who preserved, so far as it was preserved at all, the tradition of conversational language in poetry : and I might add that it seems to me easier to get back to healthy language from Dryden than it is to get back to it from Milton. For what such a generalization is worth, Milton's influence on the eighteenth century was much more deplorable than Dryden's.

If several very important reservations and exceptions are made, I think that it is not unprofitable to compare Milton's development with that of James Joyce. The initial similarities are strong musical tastes and abilities, followed by musical training, wide and curious knowledge, gift for acquiring languages, and remarkable powers of memory perhaps fortified by defective vision. The important differance is that Joyce's imagination is not naturally

of so purely auditory a type as Milton's. In his early work, and at least in part of *Ulysses*, there is visual and other imagination of highest kind ; and I may be mistaken in thinking that the later part of *Ulysses* shows a turning from the visible world to draw rather on the resources of phantasmagoria. In any case, one may suppose that the replenishment of visual imagery during later years has been insufficient ; so that what I find in *Work in Progress* is an auditory imagination abnormally sharpened at the expense of the visual. There is still a little to be seen, and what there is to see is worth looking at. And I would repeat that with Joyce this development seems to be largely due to circumstances : whereas Milton may be said never to have seen anything. For Milton, therefore, the concentration on sound was wholly a benefit. Indeed, I find, in reading *Paradise Lost*, that I am happiest where there is least to visualize. The eye is not shocked in his twilit Hell as it is in the Garden of Eden, where I for one can get pleasure from the verse only by the deliberate effort not to visualize Adam and Eve and their surroundings.

I am not suggesting any close parallel between the 'rhetoric' of Milton and the later style of Joyce. It is a different music ; and Joyce always maintains some contact with the conversational tone. But it may prove to be equally a blind alley for the future development of the language : being preferable to Milton's, in the respect that it cannot be imitated.

A disadvantage of the rhetorical style appears to be, that a dislocation takes place, through the hypertrophy of the auditory imagination at the expense of the visual and tactile, so that the inner meaning is separated from the surface, and tends to become something occult, or at least without effect upon the reader until fully understood. To extract everything possible from *Paradise Lost*, it would seem necessary to read it in two different ways, first solely for the sound, and second for the sense. The full beauty of his long periods can hardly be enjoyed while we are wrestling with the meaning as well ; and for the pleasure of the ear the meaning is hardly necessary, except in so

far as certain key-words indicate the emotional tone of the passage. Now Shakespeare, or Dante, will bear innumerable readings, but at each reading all the elements of appreciation can be present. There is no interruption between the surface that these poets present to you and the core. While, therefore, I cannot pretend to have penetrated to any 'secret' of these poets, I feel that such appreciation of their work as I am capable of points in the right direction; whereas I cannot feel that my appreciation of Milton leads anywhere outside of the mazes of sound. That, I feel, would be the matter for a separate study, like that of Blake's prophetic books ; it might be well worth the trouble, but would have little to do with my interest in the poetry. So far as I perceive anything, it is a glimpse of a theology that I find in large part repellent, expressed through a mythology which would have better been left in the Book of *Genesis*, upon which Milton has not improved. There seems to me to be a division, in Milton, between the philosopher or theologian and the poet ; and, for the latter, I suspect also that this concentration upon the auditory imagination leads to at least an occasional levity. I can enjoy the roll of

...Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can
And samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne,
To Paquin of Sinaean kings, and thence
To Agra and Lahore of great Mogul
Down to the golden Chersoness, or where
The persian in Ecbatan sate, or since
In Hispahan, or where the Russian Ksar
In Mosco, or the Sultan in Bizance,
Turchestan-born...

and the rest of it, but I feel that this is not serious poetry, not poetry fully occupied about its business, but rather a solemn game· More often, admittedly, Milton uses proper names in moderation, to obtain the same effect of magnificence with them as does Marlowe—nowhere perhaps better than in the passage from *Lycidas*.

Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;
Or whether thou to our moist vows deny'd
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great vision of the guarded Mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold...

than which, for the single effect of grandeur of sound, there is nothing finer in poetry.

I make no attempt to appraise the 'greatness' of Milton in relation to poets who seem to me more comprehensive and better balanced : it has seemed to me more fruitful for the present to press the parallel between *Paradise Lost* and *Work in Progress ;* and both Milton and Joyce are so exalted in their own kinds, in the whole of literature, that the only writers with whom to compare them are writers who have attempted something very different. Our views about Joyce, in any case, must remain at the present time tentative. But there are two attitudes both of which are necessary and right to adopt in considering the work of any poet. One is when we isolate him, when we try to understand the rules of his own game, adopt his own point of view: the other, perhaps less usual, is when we measure him by outside standards of language and of something called Poetry, in our own language and in the whole history of European literature. It is from the second point of view that my objections to Milton are made : it is from this point of view that we can go so far as to say that, although his work realizes superbly one important element in poetry, he may still be considered as having done damage to the English language from which it has not wholly recovered.

['A note on the Verse of John Milton', contributed to *Essays and Studies*, 1936]

MILTON I

BY

T. S. ELIOT

SUMMARY

Milton Left Bad Influence on Poetry.

Milton is indeed a very great poet, but it is rather puzzling to decide in what his greatness lies. On careful examination the marks against him appear to be more numerous and significant than the marks to his credit. As a man he is antipathete, and from every other point of view he is unsatisfactory. His greatness as a poet has been sufficiently celebrated, though largely for the wrong reasons; his misdeeds as a poet have also been called attention to. But it is necessary to assert his greatness in that what he could do well he did better than any one has ever done, and at the same time the serious charge against him that he subjected the(English)language to deterioration.

The badness of the bad verse of the eighteenth century was due to Milton's influence more than to that of Dryden or Pope. But "bad influence" is not a serious charge because much responsibility desolves on the poets of the century themselves for being so influenced. The charge is more serious if it is affirmed that Miltion's bad influence was not limited to the eighteenth century or to bad poets, but that it is still to be grappled wi.h. The most important fact about Milton is his blindness. Had he been a man of very keen senses, his blindness would not have mattered so much. But withered early by book learning and depending solely on the sense of learing, it mattered a great deal. It seems to have helped him to concentrate on what he could do best. We find no

visaul imagination conspicuous in Milton's poetry like what we find in Shakespeare (a passage from **Macleth** is here quoted). Shakespeare creates beautiful images pleasant to the eye as well to the common sense conveying the feeling of being in a particular place at a particular time.

Milton's Language Artificial and Conventional

With Shakespeare the Combinations of words offer perpetual novelty they enlarge the meaning of the individual words joined as "procrceant cradle" and "rooky wood".

Milton's images do not give this sense of particularity nor are separate words developed in significance. His language is *artificial* and *Conventional*. The imagery in *L'Allegro* and *It Penseroso* is all general. The writer quotes 6 lines from L'Allegro to show that the imagery is general. No particular ploughman, milkmaid etc can be imagined. It is not unfair to say that Milton writes English like a dead language, his syntax is involved. But a tortous style aimed at precision is not necessary when a dead one when the sense so demands(as earth Henry James).

Milton and Henry James Compared

The writer quotes a passage from *Paradise Lost* and a prose passage of Henry James, from *The Ivory Tower* by way of comparison.

Both use an eieborate style which departs from lucid simplicity. The style of James depends for its effect a good deal on the sound of a voice, James's own painfully explaining. With James the complication is deliberate to retain any of the real intricacies and by paths of mental movement; on Milton a simplified and abstract thought is deliberately expressed in a complicated sentence, (as the speech of the dark angel in the passage quoted), for the sake of musical value not for significance. It is not that Milton has no important idea to convey, but that his syntax is determined by mu'☐cal significance meant for

the ear, and not by an attempt to follow actual speech or thought. The result with Milton is, in one sense of the word, *rhetoric* but "rhetoric" is not necessarily bad in its influence ; it may be considered bad in relation to the historical life of a language as a whole. Of the two poets, Milton and Dryden, the influence of Dryden was less harmful, because he preserved the tradition of conversational language in poetry, and one can easily get back to healthy language. But it is not so with Milton, and his influence on the eighteeth century was more deplorable than Dryden's.

Milton and James Joyce Compared

Milton and James Joyce have initial similarities, both having strong musical tastes and abilities, followed by musical, training, wide and curious knowledge, gift for acquiring languages, and remarkable powers of memory perhaps fortified by defective vision. The important difference is that Joyce's imagination is not naturally of so purely auditary a type as Milton's. In later years; however, as in *work in Progress* the auditory imagination is abnormally sharpened at the expense of the visual, but this development seems to be due to circumstances. Whereas Milton being deprived of sight may be said never to have seen anything, and so for him the concetration on sound was wholly a benefit. Once feels greater pleasure in reading *Paradise Lost* where there is least to visualize. The dimly lit Hell does not shock the eye as the Garden of Eden does. One gets pleasure from the verse by deliberate effort not to visualize Adam and Eve and their surroundings.

Disadvantage of Rhetorical Style

There is a disadvantage in the rhetorical style, because the emphasis on the auditory imagination at the expense of the visual causes a dislocation so that the inner meaning is separted from the surface and tends to become some thing ocult. It is difficult to appriciate *Paradise Lost* properly unless one reads it in two different ways, first

solely for the sound and second for the sense. The beauty of the poem can hardly be enjoyed while we are struggling with the meaning. Shakespeare and Dante are free from this defect. The writer feels that his appreciation of Milton does not lead anywhere outside of the mazes of sound. There is glimpse of theology which is repellent and should have been left alone. The concentration open the auditory imagination leads Milton to at least an occasional levity. One can enjoy what can easily be understood. Indeed Milton exploits proper names with great advantage (as shown in the passage from Lycidas here quoted). Milton's *Paradise Lost* and James Joyce's *Work in progress* can be placed side by side for comparison because they run as similar lines, and both poets are so eminent ; other writers have attempted something very different. When Milton is judged by the standard of language and poetry not merely of England but of whole history of European literature, it can be said that although Milton realizes superlly one important element in poetry, he may still be considered to have done much damage to the English language from which it has not wholly recovered.

MILTON II

Samuel Johnson, addressing himself to examine Milton's versification, in the *Ramblar* of Saturday, 12 January 1751, thought it necessary to excuse his temerity in writing upon a subject already so fully discussed. In justification of his essay this great critic and poet remarked : "There are, in every age, new errors to be rectified, and new prejudices to be opposed." I am obliged to phrase my own apology rather differently. The errors of our own times have been rectified by vigorous hands, and the prejudices opposed by commanding voices. Some of the errors and prejudices have been associated with my own name, and of these in particular I shall find myself impelled to speak ; it will, I hope, be attributed to me for modesty rather than for conceit if I maintain that no one can correct an error with better authority than the person who has been held responsible for it. And there is, I think, another justification for my speaking about Milton, besides the singular one which I have just given. The champions of Milton in our time, with one notable exception, have been scholars and teachers. I have no claim to be either : I am aware that my only claim upon your attention, in speaking of Milton or of any other great poet, is by appeal to your curiosity, in the hope that you may care to know what a contemporary writer of verse thinks of one of his predecessors.

I believe that the scholar and the practitioner in the field of literary criticism should supplement each other's work. The criticism of the practitioner will be all the better, certainly, if he is not wholly destitute of scholarship ; and the criticism of the scholar will be all the better if he has some experience of the difficulties of writing

*The Henriette Hertz Lecture, delivered to the British Academy, 26 March 1947. (*Editor's note*)

verse. But the orientation of the two critics is different. The scholar is more concerned with the understanding of the masterpiece in the environment of its author : with the world in which that author lived, the temper of his age, intllectual formation,the books which he had read,and the influences which had moulded him. The practitioner is concerned less with the author than with the poem ; and with the poem in relation to his own age. he asks : Of what use is the poetry of this poet to poets writing today? Is it, or can it become, a living force in English poetry still unwritten ? So we may say that the scholar's interest is in the permanent, the practitoner's in the immediate. The scholar can teach us where we should bestow our *admiration* and *respect* : ihe practitioner should be able, when he is the right poet talking about the right poet, to make an old masterpiece actual, give it contemporary importance, and persuade his audience that it is interesting, exciting, enjoyable, and *active*. I can give only one example of contemporary criticism of Milton, by a critic of the type to which I belong if I have any critical pretensions at all : that is the Introduction to Milton's *English Poems* in the 'World's Classics' series, by the late Charles Williams. It is not a comprehensive essay ; it is notable primarily because it provides the best prolegomenon to *Comus* which any modern reader could have ; but what distinguishes it throughout (and the same is true of most of Williams's critical writing) is the author's warmth of feeling and his success in communicating it to the reader. In this, so far as I am aware, the essay of Williams is a solitary example.

I think it is useful, in such an examination as I propose to make, to keep in mind some critic of the past, of one's own type, by whom to measure one's opinions : a critic sufficiently remote in time, for his local errors and prejudices to be not identical with one's own. That is why I began by quoting Samuel Johnson. It will hardly be contested that as a critic of poetry Johnson wrote as a practitioner and not as a scholar. Because he was a poet himself, and a good poet, what he wrote about poetry must

be read with respect. And unless we know and appreciate Johnson's poetry we cannot judge either the merits or the limitations of his criticism. It is a pity that what the common reader today has read, or has remembered, or has seen quoted, are mostly those few statements of Johnson's from which later critics have vehemently dissented. But when Johnson held an opinion which seems to us wrong, we are never safe in dismissing it without inquiring why he was wrong; he had his own 'errors and prejudices, certainly, but for lack of examining them sympathetically we are always in danger of merely countering error with error and prejudice with prejudice. Now Johnson was, in his day, very much a modern: he was concerned with how poetry should be written in his own time. The fact that he came towards the end, rather than the beginning of a style, the fact that his time was repidly passing away, and that the canons of taste which he observed were about to fall into desuetude, does not diminish the interest of his criticism. Nor does the likelihood that the development of poetry in the next fifty years will take quite different directions from those which to me seem desirable to explore, deter me from asking the questions that Johnson implied: How should poetry be written now? and what place does the answer to this question give to Milton And I think that the answers to these questions may be different now from the answers that were correct twenty-five years ago.

There is one prejudice against Milton, apparent on almost every page of Johnson's *Life of Milton*, which I imagine is still general: we, however, with a longer historical perspective, are in a better position than was Johnson to recognize it had to make allowance for it. This is a prejudice which I share myself: an antipathy towards Milton the man. Of this in itself I have nothing further to say: all that is necessary is to record one's awareness of it. But this prejudice is often involved with another, more obscure: and I do not think that Johnson had disengaged the two in his own mind. The fact is simply that the Civil War of the seventeenth century, in which

Milton is a symbolic figure, has never been concluded. The Civil War is not ended : I question whether any serious civil war ever does end. Throughout that period English society was so convulsed and divided that the effects are still felt. Reading Johnson's essay one is always aware that Johnson was obstinately and passionately of another party. No other English poet, not Wordsworth, or Shelley, lived through or took sides in such momentous events as did Milton ; of no other poet is it so difficult to consider the poetry simply as poetry, without our theological and political dispositions, conscious and unconscious, inherited are acquired, making an unlawful entry. And the danger is all the greater because these emotions now take different vestures. It is now considered grotesque, on political grounds, to be of the party of King Charles ; it is now, I believe. considered equally grotesque, on moral grounds, to be of the party of the Puritans ; and to most persons today the religious views of both parties may seem equally remote. Nevertheless, the passions are unquenched, and if we are not very wide awake their smoke will obscure the glass through which we examine Milton's poetry. Something has been done, certainly, to persuade us that Milton was never really of any party, but disagreed with everyone. Mr Wilson Knight, in *Chariot of Wrath*, has argued that Milton was more a monarchist than a republican, and not in any modern sense a 'democrat'. And Professor Saurat has produced evidence to show that Milton's theology was highly eccentric, and as scandalous to Protestants as to Catholics-that he was, in fact, a sort of Christadelphian, and perhaps not a very orthodox Christadelphian at that; while on the other hand Mr C. S. Lewis has opposed Professor Saurat by skilfully arguing that Milton, at least in *Paradise Lost*. can be acquitted of heresy even from a point of view so orthodox as that of Mr Lewis himself. On these questions I hold no opinion : it is probably beneficial to question the assumption that Milton was a sound Free Churchman and member of the Liberal Party ; but I think that we still have to be on guard against an

unconscious partisanship if we aim to attend to the poetry for the poetry's sake.

So much for our prejudices. I come next to the positive objection to Milton which has been raised in our own time, that is to say, the charge that he is an unwholesome influence. And from this I shall proceed to the permanent strictures of reproof (to employ a phrase of Johnson's) and, finally, to the grounds on which I consider him a great poet and one whom poets today might study with profit.

For a statement of the *generalized* belief in the unwholesomeness of Milton's influence I turn to Mr Middleton Murry's critique of Milton in his *Heaven and Earth*—a book which contains chapters of profound insight, interrupted by passages which seem to me intemperate. Mr Murry, approaches Milton after his long and patient study of Keats ; and it is through the eyes of Keats that he sees Milton.

Keats [*Mr Murry writes*], *as a poetic artist, second to none since Shakespeare, and Blake, as a prophet of spiritual values unique in our history, both passed substantially the same judgement on Milton : 'Life to him would be death to me.' And whatever may be our verdict on the development of English poetry since Milton, we must admit the justice of Keats's opinion that Milton's magnificence led nowhere. 'English must be kept up,' said Keats. To be influenced beyond a certain point by Milton's art, he felt dammed the creative flow of the English genius in and through itself. In saying this, I think, Keats voiced the very inmost of the English genins. To pass under the spell of Milton is to be condemned to imitate him. It is quite different with Shakespeare baffles and liberates ; Miiton is perspicuous and constricts.*

This is a very confident affirmation, and I criticize it with some diffidence because I cannot pretend to have devoted as much study to Keats, or to have as intimate an understanding of his difficulties, as Mr Murry. But Mr Murry seems to me here to be trying to transform the predi-

cament of a particular poet with a particular aim at a particular moment in time into a censure of timeless validity. He appears to assert that the liberative function of Shakespeare and the constrictive menace of Milton are permanent characteristics of these two poets. 'To be influenced beyond a certain point' by any one master is bad for any poet; and it does not matter whether that influence is Milton's or another's ; and as we cannot anticipate where that point will come, we might be better advised to call it an uncertain point. If it is not good to remain under the spell of Milton, is it good to remain under the Shakespeare? It depends partly upon what genre of poetry you are trying to develop. Keats wanted to write an epic, and he found, as might be expected, that the time had not arrived at which another English epic, comparable in grandeur to *Paradise Lost*, could be written. He also tried his hand at writing plays; and one might argue that *King Stephen* was more blighted by Shakespeare than *Hyperion* by Milton. Certainly, *Hyperion* remains a magnificent fragment which one re-reads; and *King Stephen* is a play which we may have read once, but to which we never return for enjoyment, Milton made a great epic impossible for succeeding generations; Shakespeare made a great poetic drama impossible; such a situation is inevitable, and it persists until the language has so altered that there is no danger, because no possibility, of imitation. Anyone who tries to write poetic drama, even today, should know that half of his energy must be exhausted in the effort to escape from the constricting toils of Shakespeare; the moment his attention is relaxed, or his mind fatigued, he will lapse into bad Shakespearian verse. For a long time after an epic poet like Milton, or a dramatic poet like Shakespeare nothing can be done. Yet the effort must be repeatedly made; for we can never know in advance when the moment is approaching at which a new epic, or a new drama, will be possible ; and when the moment does draw near it may be that the genius of an individual poet will perform the last mutation of idiom and versification of idiom and versification which will bring that new poetry into being.

I have referred to Mr Murry's view of the bad influ-

ence of Milton as generalized, because it is implicitly the whole personality of Milton that is in question: not specifically his beliefs, or his language or versification, but the beliefs as realized in that particular personality, and his poetry as the expression of it. By the *particular* wiew of Milton's influence as bad, I mean that view which attends to the language, the syntax, the versification, the imagery. I do not suggest that there is here a complete difference of subject-matter: it is the difference of approach, the difference of the focus of interest, between the philosophical critic and the literary critic.. An incapacity for the abstruse, and an interest in poety which is primarily a technical interest, dispose my mind towards the more limited and perhaps more superficial task. Let us proceed to look at Milton's influence from this point of view, that of the writer of poetry in our own time.

The reproach against Milton, that his technical influence has been bad, appears to have been made by no one more positively than by myself. I find myself saying, as recently as 1936, that this charge against Milton.

*appears a good deal more serious if we affirm that Milton's poetry could only be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatever. It is more serious, also if we affirm that Milton's bad influence may be traced much farther than the eighteenth century, and much farther than upon bad poets: if we say that it was an influence against which we still have to struggle.**

In writing these sentences I failed to draw a threefold distinction, which now seems to me of some importance. There are three separate assertions implied. The first is, that an influence has been bad in the past: this is to assert that good poets, in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, would have written better if they had not submitted themselves to the influence of Milton. The second assertion is, that the cotenmporary situation is such that Milton is a master whom we should avoid. The third is, that the influence of Milton, or of any particular poet, can be

* See pp. 116-17 above. [*Editor's note*]

always bad, and that we can predict that wherever it is found at any time in the future, however remote, it will be a bad influence. Now, the first and third of these assertions I am no longer prepared to make, because, detached from the second, they do not appear to me to have any meaning.

For the first, when we consider one great poet of the past, and one or more other poets, upon whom we say he has exerted a bad influence, we must admit that the responsibility, if there be any, is rather with the poets who were influenced than with the poet whose work exerted the influence. We can, of course, show that certain tricks or mannerisms which the imitators display are due to conscious or unconscious imitation and emulation, but that is a reproach against their injudicious choice of a model and not against their model itself. And we can never prove that any particular poet would have written better poetry if he had escaped that influence. Even if we assert, what can only be a matter of faith, that Keats would have written a very great epic poem if Milton had not preceded him, is it sensible to repine for an unwritten masterpiece, in exchange for one which we possess and acknowledge ? And as for the remote future, what can we affirm about the poetry that will be written then, except that we should probably be unable to understand or to enjoy i , and that therefore we can hold no opinion as to what 'good' and 'bad' influence will *mean* in that future ? The only relation in which the question of influence, good and bad, is significant, is the relation to the immediate future. With that question I shall engage at the end. I wish first to mention another reproach against Milton, that represented by the phrase 'dissociation of sensibility'.

I remarked many years ago, in an essay on Dryden,* that

*The essay, in fact, was on the 'Metaphysical', and was written for *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1921. See p. 105 above. [*Editor's note*]

In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural was due to the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden.

The longer passage from which this sentence is taken is quoted by Dr Tillyard in his *Milton*. Dr. Tillyard makes the following comment :

Speaking only of what in this passage concerns Milton, I would say that there is here a mixture of truth and falsehood. Some sort of dissociation of sensibility in Milton, not necessarily undesirable, has to be admitted; but that he was responsible for any such dissociation in others (at least till this general dissociation had inevitably set in) is untrue. I believe that the general affirmation represented by the phrase 'dissociation of sensibility' one of the two or three phrases of my coinage—like 'objective correlative'*—which had a success in the world astonishing to their author) retains some validity; but I now incline to agree with Dr. Tillyard that to lay the burden on the shoulders of Milton and Dryden was a Mistake. If such a dissociation did take place, I suspect that the causes are too complex and too profound to justify our accounting for the change in terms of literary criticism. All we can say is, that something like this did happen; that it had something to do with the Civil War; that it would even be unwise to say it was caused by the Civil War, but that it is a a consequence of the same causes which brought about the Civil War; that we must seek the causes in Europe, not in England alone: and for what these causes were, we may dig and dig until we get to a depth at which words and concepts fail us.

Before proceeding to take up the case against Milton, as it stood for poets twenty-five years ago—the second, and only significant meaning of 'bad influence'—I think it would be best to consider what permanent strictures of

*See p. 102 above. [*Editor's note*]

reproof may be drawn : those censures which, when we make them, we must assume to be made by enduring laws of taste. The essence of the permanent censure of Milton is, I believe, to be found in Johnson's essay. This is not the place in which to examine certain particular and erroneous judgements of Johnson ; to explain his condemnation of *Comus* and *Samson* by his applying dramatic canons which to us seem inapplicable ; or to condone his dismissal of the versification of *Lycidas* by the specialization, rather than the absence, of his sense of rhythm. Johnson's most important censure of Milton is contained in three paragraphs, which I must ask leave to quote in full.

Throughout all his greater works [says Johnson] *there prevails an uniform peculiarity of* diction, *a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer ; and which is so far removed from common use, that an unlearned reader, when he first opens the book, finds himself surprised by a new language.*

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong with Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suited to the grandeur of his ideas. Our language, *says Addison*, sank under him. *But the truth is, that both in prose and in verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantic principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned ; for there judgement operates freely, neither softened by the beauty, nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts ; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.*

Milton's style was not modified by his subject ; what is shown with greater extent in Paradise Lost *may be found in* Comus. *One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets ; the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian ; perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues. Of him at last, may be said what Johnson said of Spenser, that he* wrote no language, *but has formed what*

Butler called a Babylonish dialect, *in itself harsh and barbarous, but made by exalted genius and extensive learning the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.*

This criticism seems to me substantially true : indeed, unless we accept it, I do not think we are in the way to appreciate the peculiar greatness of Milton. His style is not a *classic* style, in that it is not the elevation of a *common* style, by the final touch of genius, to greatness. It is, from the foundation, and in every particular, a personal style, not based upon common speech, or common prose, or direct communication of meaning. Of some great poetry one has difficulty in pronouncing just what it is, what infinitesimal touch, that has made all the difference from a plain statement which anyone could make ; the slight transformation which, while it leaves a plain statement a plain statement, has always the maximal, never the minimal, alteration of ordinary language. Every distortion of construction, the foreign idiom, the use of a word in a foreign way or with the meaning of the foreign word from which it is derived rather than the accepted meaning in English, every idiosyncrasy is a particular act of violence which Milton has been the first to commit. There is no cliche, no poetic diction in the derogatory sense, but a perpetual sequence of original acts of lawlessness. Of all modern writers of verse, the nearest analogy seems to me to be Mallarme a much smaller poet, though still a great one. The personalities, the poetic theories of the two men could not have been more different ; but in respect of the violence which they could do to language, and justify, there is a remote similarity. Milton's poetry is poetry at the farthest possible remove from prose: his prose seems to me too near to half-formed poetry to be good prose.

To say that the work of a poet is at the farthest possible remove from prose would once have struck me as condemnatory : it now seems to me simply, when we have to do with a Milton, the precision of its peculiar greatness. As a poet, Milton seems to me probably the greatest of all eccentrics. His work illustrates no general principles of

good writing ; the only principles of writing that it illustrates are such as are valid only for Milton himself to observe. There are two kinds of poet who can ordinarily be of use to other poets. There are those who suggest, to one or another of their successors, something which they have not done themselves, or who provoke a different way of doing the same thing : these are likely to be not the greatest, but smaller, imperfect poets with whom later poets discover an affinity. And there are the great poets from whom we can learn negative rules : no poet can teach another to write well, but some great poets can teach others some of the things to avoid. They teach us what to avoid, by showing us what great poetry can do without —how *bare* it can be. Of these are Dante and Racine, But if we are ever to make use of Milton we must do so in quite a different way. Even a small poet can learn something from the study of Dante, or from the study of Chaucer : we must perhaps wait for a great poet before we find one who can profit from the study of Milton.

I repeat that the remoteness of Milton's verse from ordinary speech, his invention of his own poetic language, seems to me one of the marks of his greatness. Other marks are his sense of structure, both in the general design of *Paradise Lost* and *Samson*, and in his syntax ; and finally, and not least, his inerrancy, conscions or unconscious, in writing so as to make the best display of his talents, and the best concealment of his weaknesses.

The appropriateness of the subject of *Samson* is too obvious to expatiate upon : it was probably the one dramatic story out of which Milton could have made a masterpiece. But the complete suitability of *Paradise Lost* has not, I think, been so often remarked. It was surely an intuitive perception of what he could not do, that arrested Milton's project of an epic on King Arthur. For one thing, he had little interest in, or understanding of, individual human beings. In *Paradise Lost* he was not called upon for any of that understanding which comes from an affectionate observation of men and women. Such an interest in human beings was not required-indeed its

absence was a necessary condition-for the creation of his figures of Adam and Eve. These are not a man and woman such as any we know : if they were, they would not be Adam and Eve. They are the original *Man* and *Woman*, not types, but prototypes : if they were not set apart from ordinary humanity they would not be Adam and Eve. They have the general charcteristics of men and women, such that we can recognize, in the temptation and the fall, the first motions of the faults and virtues, the objection and the nobility, of all their descendants. They have ordinary to the right degree, and yet are not and should not be, ordinary mortals. Were they more particularized they would be false, and if Milton had been more interested in humanity, he could not have created them. Other critics have remarked upon the exactness, without defect or exaggeration, with which Moloch, Belial, and Mammon, in the second book, speak according to the particular sin which each represents. It would not be suitable that the infernal powers should have, in the human sense, characters, for a character is always mixed ; but in the hands of an inferior manipulator, they might easily have been raduced to *humours*.

The appropriateness of the material of *Paradise Lost* to the genius and the limitations of Milton, is still more evident when we consider the visual imagery. I have already remarked, in a paper written some years ago,* on Milton's weakness of visual observation, a weakness which I think was always present - the effect of his blindness may have been rather to strengthen the compensatory qualities than to increase a fault which was already present. Mr Wilson Knight, who has devoted close study to recurrent imagery in poetry, has called attention to Milton's propensity towards images of engineering and mechanics ; to me it seems that Milton is at his best in imagery suggestive of vast size, limitless space, abysmal depth, and light and darkness. No theme and no setting, other than that which he chose in *Paradise Lost*, could have given him such scope for the kind of imagery in which he excel-

*See p. 116 above. [*Editor's note*]

led, or made less demand upon those powers of visual imagination which were in him defective.

Most of .he absurdities and inconsistencies to which Johnson calls attention, and which, so far as they can justly be isolated in this way, he properly condems, will I think appear in a more correct proportion if we consider them in relation to this general judgement. I do not think that we should attempt to *see* very clearly any scene that Milton depicts : it should be accepted as a shifting phantasmagory. To complain, because we first find the arch-fiend 'chain'd on the burning lake', and in a minute or two see him making his way to the shore, is to expect a kind of consistency which the world to which Milton has introduced us does not require.

This limitat'on of visual power, like Milton's limited interest in human beings, turns out to be merely a negligible defect, but a positive virtue, when we visit Adam and Eve in Eden. Just as a higher degree of characterization of Adam and Eve would be unsuitable, so a more vivid picture of the earthly Paradise would have been less paradisiacal. For a greater definiteness, a more detailed account of flora and fauna, could only have assimilated Eden to the landscapes of earth with which we are familiar. As it is, the impression of Eden which we retain, is the most suitable, and is that which Milton was most qualified to give : the impression of *light*—a day light and a starlight, a light of dawn and of dusk, the light which, remembered by a man in his blindness, has a supernatural glory unexperienced by men of normal vision.

We must, then, in reading *Paradise Lost*, not expect to see clearly; our sense of sight must be blurred, so that our *hearing* may become more acute. *Pardise Lost*, like *Finnegan's Wake* (for I can think of no work which provides a more interesting parallel: two great books by blind musicians, each writing a language of his own based upon English) makes this peculiar demand for a readjustment of the reader's mode of apprehension. The emphasis is on the sound, not the vision, upon the word, not the

idea; and in the end it is the unique versification that is the most certain sign of Milton' s intellectual mastership.

On the subject of Milton's versification: so far as I am aware, little enough has been written. We have Johnson's essay in the *Rambler*, which deserves more study than it has received, and we have a short treatise by Robert Bridges on *Milton's Prosody*. I speak of Bridges with respect, for no poet of our time has given such close attention to prosody as he. Bridges catalogues the systematic irregularities which give perpetual varie y to Milton's verse, and I can find no fault with his analysis. But however interesting these analyses are, I do not think that it is by such means that we gain an appreciation of the peculiar rhythm of a poet. It seems to me also that Milton's verse is especially refractory to yielding up its secrets to examination of the single line. For his verse is not formed in this way. It is the period, the sentence and still more the paragraph, that is the unit of Milton's verse; and emphasis on the line structure is the minimum necessary to provide a counter-pattern to the period structure. It is only in the period that the wave-length of Miltons's verse is to be found: it is his ability to give a perfect and unique pattern to every paragraph, such that the full beauty of the line if found in its context, and his ability to work in 'larger musical units than any other poet - that is to me the most conclusive evidence of Milton's supreme mastery. The peculiar feeling, almost a physical sensation of a breathless leap, communicated by Milton's long periods, and by his alone, is impossible to procure from rhymed verse. Indeed, this mastery is more conclusive evidence of his intellectual power, than is his grasp of any *ideas* that he borrwed or invented. To be able to control so many words at once is the token of a mind of most exceptional energy.

It is interesting at this point to recall the general observations upon blank verse, which a consideration of *Paradise Lost* promoted Johnson to make towards the end of his essay.

The music of the English heroic lines strikes the ear so faintly, that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line cooperate together ; this cooperation can only be obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another as distinct system of sounds ; and this distinctness is obtained by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer ; and there are only a few skilful and happy reader of Milton, who enable thire audience to perceive where the lines end or begin, Blank verse, *said an ingenious critic,* seems to be verse only to the eye

Some of my audience may recall that this last remark, in almost the same words, was often made, a literary generation ago, about the 'free verse' of the period : and even without this encouragement from Johnson it would have occurred to my mind to declare Milton to be the greatest master of free verse in our language. What is interesting about Johnson's paragraph, however, is that it represents the judgement of man who had by no means a deaf ear, but simply a *specialized* ear, for verbal music. Within the limits of the poetry of his own period, Johnson is a very good judge of the relative merits of several poets as writers of blank verse. But on the whole, the blank verse of his age might more properly be called unrhymed verse ; and nowhere is this difference more evident than in the verse of his own tragedy *Irene* : the phrasing is admirable, the style elevated and correct, but each line cries out for a companion to rhyme with it. Indeed, it is only with labour, or by occasional inspiration, or by submission to the influence of the older dramatists, that the blank verse of the nineteenth century succeeds in making the absence of rhyme inevitable and right, with the rightness of Milton. Even Johnson admitted that he could not wish that Milton had been a rhymer. Nor did the nineteenth century succeed in giving to blank verse the flexibility which it needs if the tone of common speech, talking of the topics of common intercourse, is to be employed ; so that when our more modern practitioners of

blank verse do not touch the sublime, they frequently approach the ridiculous. Milton perfected non-dramatic blank verse and at the same time imposed limitations, very hard to break, upon the use to which it may be put if its greatest musical possibilities are to be exploited.

I come at last to compare my own attitude, as that of a poetical practitioner perhaps typical of a generation twenty-five years ago, with my attitude today, I have thought it well to take matters in the order in which I have taken them to discuss first the censures and detractions which I believe to have permanent validity, and which were best made by Johnson, in order to make clearer the causes, and the justification, for hostility to Milton on the part of poets at a particular juncture. And I wished to make clear those excellences of Milton which particularly impress me, before explaining why I think that the study of his verse might at last be of benefit to poets.

I have on several occasions suggested that the important changes in the idiom of English verse which are represented by the nemes of Dryden and Wordsworth, may be characterized as successful attempts to escape from a poetic idiom which had ceased to have a relation to contemporary speech. This is the sense of Wordsworth's Prefaces. By the beginning of the present century another revolution in idiom—and such revolutions bring with them an alteration of metric; a new appeal to the ear—was due. It inevitably happens that the young poets engaged in such a revolution will exalt the merits of those poets of the past who offer them example and stimulation, and depreciate the merits of poets who do not stand for the qualities which they are zealous to realize. This is not only inevitable, it is right. It is even right, and certainly inevitable, that their practice, still more influential than their critical pronouncements, should attract their own readers to the poets by whose work they have been influenced. Such influence has certainly contributed to the taste, if we can distinguish the *taste* from the *fashion*, for Donne. I do not think that any modern poet, unless in a fit of irresponsible peevishness, has ever denied Milton's consummate powers.

And it must be said that Milton's diction is not a poetic diction in the sense of being a debased currency: when he violates the English language he is imitating nobody, and he is inimitable. But Milton does, as I have said, represent poetry at the extreme limit from prose; and it was one of our tenets that verse should have the virtues of prose, that diction should become assimilated to cultivated contemporary speech, before aspiring to the elevation of poetry. Another tenet was that the subject-matter and the imagery of poetry should be extended to topics and objects related to the life of a modern man or woman; that we were to seek the non-poetic, to seek even material refractory to transmutation into poetry, and words and phrases which had not been used in poetry before. And the study of Milton could be of no help: it was only a hindrance.

We cannot, in literature, any more than in the rest of life, live in a perpetual state of revolution. If every generation of poets made it their task to bring poetic diction up to date with the spoken language, poetry would fail in one of its most important obligations. For poetry should help, not only to refine the language of the time, but to prevent it from changing too rapidly: a development of language at too great a speed would be a development in the sense of a progressive deterioration, and that is our danger today. If the poetry of the rest of this century takes the line of development which seems to me, reviewing the progress of poetry through the last three centuries, the right course, it will discover new and more elaborate patterns of a diction now established. In this search it might have much to learn from Milton's extended verse structure; it might also avoid the danger of a *servitude* to colloquial speech and to current jargon. It might also learn that the music of verse is strongest in poetry which has a definite meaning expressed in the properest words. Poets might be led to admit that a knowledge of the literature of their own language, with a knowledge of the literature and the grammatical construction of other languages, is a very valuable part of the poet's equipment. And they might, as I have already hinted, devote some study to Milton as, outside the theatre, the greatest master

in our language of freedom within form. A study of *Samson* should sharpen anyone's appreciation of the justified irregularity, and put him on guard against the pointless irregularity. In studyiug *Paradise Lost* we come to perceive that the verse is continuously animated by the departure from, and return to, the regular measure; and that, in comparison with Milton, hardly any subsequent writer of blank verse appears to exercise any freedom at all. We can also be led to the reflection that a monotony of unscannable verse fatigues the attention even more quickly than a monotony of exact feet. In short, it now seems to me that poets are sufficiently removed from Milton, and sufficiently liberated from his reputation, to approach the study of his work without danger, and with profit to their poetry and to the English language.

[*Milton, 1947*]

MILTON II

SUMMARY.

The Scholar and the Practitioner.

There is another justification for speaking about Milton. The champions of Milton in our time, with a few exceptions, have been scholars and teachers. The writer claims to be neither. His only claim upon the reader's attention is by appeal to their curiosity to know what a contemporary poet thinks of one of his predecessors. The scholar and the practitioner, in the field of literary criticism, should supplement each other's work. But the the practitioner should not be destitute of scholarship and the scholar should have some experience of the difficulties of writing Verse. The scholar is more concerned with understanding the master-piece in the environment of the author, his intellectual gifts, his learning and the influences which had moulded him. The practitioner is concerned more with the poem than the author and with the poem in relation to his own age. He asks: Of what *use* is the poetry of this poet to poets writing today? Is it, or can it become, a living force in the English poetry still unwritten? The scholar can teach us where we should bestow our *admiration and respect*; the practitioner, when he is the right poet, would make an old masterpiece actual and give it a contemporary importance. The only example of a contemporary poet writing about Milton is Charles Williams who wrote an introduction to Milton's *English Poems*, in the Word's Classics Series.

Antipathy Towards Milton the Man.

When Samuel Johnson wrote about Milton and his poetry he wrote as a practitioner, because he was a poet himself, and deserves to be read with respect, but we can-

not judge his criticism or its merits unless we appreciate his poetry. Even when we dissent from him we must inquire why he was wrong. Johnson too in his day was a modern and was concerned with how poetry should be written in his own time. Any change in the prevailing style and in the canons of taste which he observed cannot diminish the interest of his criticism. In his writings also the questions are implied : How should poetry be written now ? and what place does the answer to this question give to Milton ? Possibly the answers may be different now from the answers that were correct twenty-five years ago.

Everywhere in Johnson's *Life of Milton* one prejudice against Milton is apparent, which is even now felt, and it is an antipathy towards Milton the man. And this prejudice is often involved with another, more obscure one- Milton's interest in the Civil War of seventeenth century. No other English poet, except Wordsworth or Shelly, lived through or took sides in such momentous events as Milton did. It has made it difficult to appreciate Milton's poetry as poetry without being influenced consciously or unconsciously by our theological and political dispositions; especially now when emotions have taken a different turn. Royalists are not liked on political grounds and Puritans on moral grounds. An attempt has been made to show that Milton really belonged to no party, but disagreed with everyone. Mr Wilson Knight in *Chariot of Wrath* has argued that Milton was more a monarchist than a republican and not in any modern sense a "democrat". Professor Saurat has shown that Milton's theology was highly eccentric, and as scandalous to Protestants as to Catholics. While Mr. C.S. Lewis has argued that at least in *Paradise Lost*, Milton can be acquitted of heresy. We must, therefore, be on guard being influenced by such considerations while examining poetry for poetry's sake.

Milton an Unwholesome Influence.

The positive objection raised against Milton in our time is the charge that he is an unwholesome influence.

On this point Mr Middleton Marry in his *Heaven and Earth* has stated,on Keat's authority,that Keats and Blake have both passed substantially the same judgement on Milton : "Life to him would be death to me," and that we must admit the justice of Keats's opinion that Milton's magnificence led nowhere. "English must be kept up," said Keats. "To be influenced beyond a certain point by Milton's art, he felt, damned the creative flow of the English genius in and through itself," Mr Marry agrees with this opinion and says : "To pass under the spell of Milton is to be condemned to imitate him. It is quite different with Shakespeare. Shakespeare baffles and liberates ; Milton is preposterous and constricts "

The writer does not agree with this confident affirmation. Murry's remarks seem to assert that the liberative function of Shakespeare and the constrictive menace of Milton are permanent characteristics of these two poets. This is not correct. We might better call it an uncertain point. It is not good to remain under the influence of any poet—Milton or Shakespeare. Keats attempted to write an epic and also tried his hand at writing plays, but his *King Stephen* (a play) was blighted by Shakespeare and *Hyperion* (an epic poem) by Milton, Milton made a great epic impossible for succeeding generations ; Shakespeare made a great poetic drama impossible. For a long time an epic poet like Milton or a dramatic poet like Shakespeare is not likely to come. But it does not mean that efforts should not be made. No one knows when the time is ripe when a new epic or a new poetic drama will be possible. In Murry's criticism of Milton, the whole personality of Milton is in question and not specifically his beliefs, or his language, or versification, but the beliefs as realized through that personality, and his poetry as the expression of it.

Milton's Influence on Modern Poets.

The charge against Milton that his technical influence has been bad was made by T.S. Eliot himself on a previous occasion (1936). Then he had said that "Milton's poetry

could only be an influence for the worse upon any poet whatever," and that the "bad influence may be traced much farther than upon bad poets" and we still have to struggle against it. In this there are three assertions implied: (1) that the influence has been bad in the past and that good poets would have written better if they had not yielded to Milton's influence. (2) That Milton is a master whom we should avoid. (3) That the influence of Milton or of any poet can *always* be bad. He is not prepared to make the first and the third of these assertions, because detached from the second they have no meaning. For the first assertion it will have to be admitted that the responsibility lies more upon the poet who yielded to influence than the poet whose work exerted the influence. The responsibility lies on the poet who unwisely chooses a model and imitates it. We cannot say that Keats would have written a very great epic poem if Milton had not preceded him. We can't repine for an unwritten master piece in exchange for one we possess. And as for the remote future nothing can be said about the "good" and "bad" influence. We are concerned with the immediate future.

The writer recalls a remark which he had made in an essay on Dryden, and had said that "In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was due to the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden". Tillyard in his *Milton* has disputed this remark. The writer admits that to lay the burden on the shoulders of Milton was a mistake. If such dissociation did take place it is difficult to account for the change in literary criticism. All that can be said is that it had something to do with the Civil War; not that it was caused by it, but is a consequence of the same causes which brought about the Civil War, and that the causes are to be sought in Europe, not in England alone.

Johnson's Censure of Milton.

The essence of permanent censure of Milton is to be found in Johnson's essay regarding *Comus* and *Samson*.

Johnson says that throughout Milton's greater works there is a peculiarity of diction and a mode and cast of expression not resembling to that of any former writer and far removed from common sense, so that an unlearned reader is surprised to find a new language. Some people impute this novelty to Milton's laborious endeavours and the grandeur of ideas. But Addison says the language sank under him. "But the truth is, that both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantic principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom." This is condemned in his prose, but is obeyed without resistance in his poetry due to its force. Johnson continues, "Milton's style was not modified by his subject ; what is shown with greater extent in *Paradise Lost* may be found in *Comus*.........the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian, perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues." It can be said that *he wrote no language*, but has formed a Babylonish dialect, harsh and barbarous, made by exallted genius and vast learning, the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure that one finds grace in its deformity.

The writer says that Johnson's criticism seems to be substantially true. Unless we accept it we cannot appreciate the true greatness of Milton. His style is not classic but personal, not based on common speech or common prose. Milton was the first to commit violence to language by using distorted construction, foreign idiom, use of a word in a foreign way or with meaning other than accepted in English. Mallarmi was his nearest analogy in this respect. "Milton's poetry is poetry at the farthest possible remove from prose ; his prose seems to me too near half-formed poetry to be good prose."

Milton the Greatest of All Eccentrics.

As a poet Milton seems to be the greatest of all eccentrics. His work illustrates no general principles of good writing ; the only principles of writing that it illustrates are such as are valid only for Milton himself to observe. There are great poets from whom we can learn negative rules. They teach us what to avoid by showing what great poetry can do without—how *bare* it can be. Of these are Dante and Racine. We can't learn anything from Milton.

The remoteness of Milton's verse from ordinary speech, and his invention of his own poetic language seem to be one of the marks of his greatness. Other marks are his sense of structure and his syntax, and finally his incrrancy in writing so as to make the best display of his talents and the best concealment of his weaknesses.

Milton's projcet of an epic on king Arthur did not succeed because he had little interest in understanding individual human beings. In *Paradise Lost* such an understanding was not needed ; in fact its *absence* was a necessary condition—for the creation of his figures of Adam and-Eve. They are not ordinary *Man* and *Woman*, not types, but prototypes. Else they would not be Adam and Eve. They have ordinary humanity to the right degree and yet are not ordinary mortals.

Milton's Blindness.

When we consider the visual imagery, we find that the material of *Paradise Lost* is appropriate to Milton's genius and his limitations—such as being deprived of eyesight. Hence Milton is at his best in imagery suggestive of vast size, limitless space, abysmal depth and light and darkness. The theme and the setting which he chose for *Paradise Lost* was most suitable to him. Most of the absurdities and inconsistencies to which Johnson has called attention and condemned can be properly understood if considered in relation to this general judgements

Milton's blindness and limited interest in human beings is not merely a negligible defect, but a positive value when we see Adam and Eve in Eden. A higher degree of characterisation was unsuitable and a vivid picture of Paradise would be less paradisiacal ; it would make Paradise look like earth with its animals and flowers. The impression of Eden given by Milton was that which he was best qualified to give. In *Paradise Lost* we must not expect to see things clearly, but with a blurred vision. The emphasis is on sound, not the vision, upon the word, not the idea and the unique versification is a sign of Miltons intellectual mastership.

Milton's Versification.

Very little has been written about Milton's versification. There is a treatise of Robert Bridges on *Milton's Prosody* and an essay of Johnson in the *Rambler*. But these are insufficient to appreciate the peculiar rythm of a poet. Milton's verse cannot be properly appreciated it we examine it line by line. It is the period, the sentence, and the paragraph that is the unit of his verse It is his ability to give a perfect and unique pattern to every paragraph, and the full beauty of the line is found in its context. This is the most conclusive evidence of Milton's supreme mastery. The peculiar feeling and sensation conveyed by his long periods is impossible to obtain from rhymed verse.

In his essay Johnson says that the music of English heroic lines (rhymed copulets) is obtained by the artifice of rhyme. "The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to periods of a declaimer," and there are very few skilful readers of *Paradise Lost* who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. Not withstanding Johnson's remarks, it can be declared that Milton is the greatest master of free verse in English. He perfected nondramatic blank verse and imposed strict limitations upon its use to exploit its great musical possibilities.

There have been important changes in the idiom of English verse associated with the names of Dryden and Wordsworth, which may be said to be successful attempts to escape from obsolete poetic idiom as observed by Wordsworths in his *Prefaces*. Another such revolution was due by the beginning of the present century. It is inevetable that young poets who take part in such a revolution exalt the merits of those poets whom they regard as models and depreciate the merits of those who do not come up to their standards. It is right and inevitable that their critical observations should attract their readers to the poets by whom they have been influenced. Such influence develops a literary taste. Now, in spite of changes of poetic idiom, no modern poet has ever denied Milton's consummate powers. It must be said that Milton's diction is not an obsolete poetic diction. When he violates the language he is not imitating any body nor any body can imitate him. But he deviates from two accepted rules—that verse should have the virtues of prose and diction should be assimilated to cultivated contemporary speech, and that the subject matter of poetry should cover topics and objects related to the life of modern man or woman. In this respect study of Milton could be of no help ; it was a hindrance.

Revolutions in literature do not take place every now and then ; if they do it is a sign of the detereoration of language and the failure of poetry to perform its most important function *viz* to refine the language and to prevent it from changing too rapidily. In trying to discover new and more elaborate patterns of diction we might have much to learn from Milton's extended verse structure, and avoid the danger of *servitude* to colloquial speech. We might devote some study to Milton who is the greatest master in language excluding dramatic poets. In Samson we find irregularities which are justified, in *Paradise Lost* the verse is continuously animated by a departure from, and return to, the regular measure.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS

MILTON I

Analysis—a close examination. *Significant*—important. *Antipathethic*—opposed in nature or disposition (to). *Celebrated*—made famous. *His greatness.........reasons*—Milton has been commonly believed to be one of the greatest poets of England, but this bel ef is based not upon a critical study of his works, but on wrong reasons and leaves no room for his defects. *Deterioration*—state of growing worse ; degradation. *What seems to me .... language*—My aim in this article is to show that Milton was a great poet, because what he could do we'l he has done much better than any one else and at the same time to call attention to the serious charges levelled against him, one of which is that he did a great harm to the English language. *There is more of Milton's influence.........else*—In the eighteenth century poetry in England had much deteriorated and this deterioration was due to Milton more than to any one else. *Dryden*—John Dryden (1631—170.) one of the most vigorous and prolific of English poets and writers, and a popular dramatist. He excelled in satire, and drew some powerful pictures of the statesmen of his day. His translation of *Virgil* ranks with Pope's translation of the *Iliad*. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. Originally a Parliamentarian he went over to the Royalsits and was laureate and historiographer-royal (1670—88). *Pope*-Alexander Pope (1688-1744),the celebrated eighteenth century poet and translator of "Homer". *Obloquy*—censure; calumny; disgrace *A good deal of the obloquy...... Milton*—Dryden and Pope, and more particularly Pope, have been severely censured for casting a bad influence on English poetry, but in fact much of this censure should fall on Milton. *Devolve*—fall. *Except for ill—i.e.* they accepted only the bad influence.

Who appear in print as critics—who write critical articles an literature for literary journals. *A breach of peace*—an act causing disorder. *Wanton*—wilful. *Iconoclasm*—act of breaking images. *Wanton iconoclasm*—a wilful and heinous act of injuring the feelings of others. *Hoodlumism*—rowdyism. *Jury*—a body of twelve or more persons, selected and sworn, as prescribed by law, to declare the truth on evidence before them. *Poetical practitioners*—poets. *Blindness*—Milton lost his eye sight in his middle age. In his sonnet on his blindness he says:-

> "*When I consider how my light is spen*
> *Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,*
> *And that one talent which is death to hide*
> *Lodged with me useless...........*"

Expertness in the art of music—Milton had training in music also. *Sensousness*—the use of his senses of touch, sigh etc. *Withered*—weakened. *Aural*—pertaining to the ear. *His gifts were naturally aural*—he had to depend on his sense of hearing. *Visual imagination*—description of things as they are seen by the eye. (The lines quoted from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, occur in Act I Scene VI. It is a speech of Banquo, one of the king's generals. The time is evening, dark enough to make necessary the toreches which heighten the picturesqueness of the scene.)

Martlet—a diminutive of martin, a large species of swallow. *Temple haunting*—that occasionally visits temples. *By his loved mansionary*—by making it his favourable abode The description implies the yearly return of the bird to its old "haunt". *Smells wooingly*—smells sweet. *Jutty*—a part that projects. *Frieze*—a band of decora ion. *Buttress*—a projecting support of a wall. *Coign of vantage*—convenient corner i.e. for nesting in. (*Coign*—a projecting corner being an obsolete spelling of "coin", "a corner stone.") *Pendent*—hanging. *Procreant cradle*—the nest is like a cradle where the martin lays eggs and hatches them.

Light thickens etc.—From Macbeth, Act III Scene II *Makes wing to*—flies to. *The rooking wood*—the wood which is the haunt of rooks or "crows." *Disparagement*—act of speaking lightly of, dispraise. *Artificial and conventional*—

unnatural ask customery i.e., not spontaneous. *Dr. Faustus*—a play written by Marlowe. *Nodding horror*—exciting fear *Forlorn*—one who has lost his way. *L'Allegro and Il Penseroso*—two famous poems of Milton. The lines quoted are from L' Allegro (lines 63 to 68). *Furrowed land*—ploughed land. *Blithe*—happily (Note the use of adjective as adverb.) *Mower*—one who mows the field or cuts grass. *Whets*—sharpens. *Hawthorn*—a kind of bush. *Dale*—low ground between hills.

Interluner—belonging to the moon's monthly period of invisibility. *When the moon......cave*—when the moon does not appear and conceals herself in a cave (for three days in the month). *Dead language*—a language no longer spoken. *Involved*—complicated. *Syntax*—the correct arrangement of words in sentence. *Tortuous*—twisted ; winding. *But a tortuous style.........sense*—a complicated style is not necessarily bad if (as Henry James uses it) the aim is to be exact and clear ; it is bad when the comphication is created simply to make verbal music without being required by the sense. *Dominations*—governments ; absolute monarchs *Virtues*—inherent powers ; strength. *Magnific*—grand ; splendid ; noble. *Titular*—nominal ; existing in name. *Engrossed*—monopolised ; appropriated. *Us eclipsed* — obscured us, left us without power. *Anointed*—consecreted with oil. *King anointed*—made king. *Knee-tribute*—the homage of kneeling. *Prostration*—act of kneeling down to pay homage. *His image*—man created after the image of God. *Proclaimed*—proclaimed king. *Thrones, dominations, princedoms etc.*—(From *Paradise Lost, Book v*, lines 772 to 784). This is a speech of Satan. When god granted all power to Messiah to deal with Satan, the rebel, and his followers, he (Satan) assembled all his adherents and addressed them saying that since all his powers, thrones and kingdoms are no more in existence than merely in name, and by the command of God another person has appropriated all power and has deprived him of every thing, and all angels are now at midnight hurrying to pay him homage, I have brought you here to think in what manner we should receive him who

is coming to exact homage from us by kneeling before him which act I have not yet done and think it beneath my dignity to prostrate before a man, when I have been doubly insulted, by being deprived of authority and then by being forced to acknowledge him as our over-lord. *Conduce*—contribute.

Portent—an evil omen. *Ostensible*—apparent. *Hypothetical best*—supposed best for the sake of argument. *But the complication with James is ....thought*—In both the passages quoted above there is a comlexity, but the complexity with James is due to the fact that he has intentionally not simplified an already complex situation because by doing so he would spoil the beauty of the intricacies; while Milton had to express a simple and abstract thought in which he has deliberately introduced a complication. *The syntax.........significance*—The arrangement of words is intended merely to give musical effect. *Auditory imagination*—pleasure felt by the ear. *Fused*—metted (and so united). *In which the auditory.........thought*—In the verse of Shakeepeare the pleasing effect on the ear is mingled with the effect on the other senses and is heighten ed. *Rhetoric*—artiffcial oratory. *Derogatory*—injurious; depreciatory.

Components—elements of a compound. *Exploited*—made use of. *Deplorable*—unhappy; undesirable. *Initial*—existing at the beginning. *Purely auditory type*—solely appreciated by the ear.*Phantasmagoria*—a fantastic series of illusive images. *Replenishment of visual imagery*—creating images which please the eye. *Abnormally*—beyond all proportion. *For Milton......benefit*—Milton being unable to create images pleasing to the eye could not do better than exploiting the music of words. *Twilit*—dimly lit.

Joyce always.........tone—Joyce uses language which is to an extent like the spoken language. *Blind alley*—a deceptive thing. *Dislocation*—breach; separation. *Hyper-trophy*—excessive nourishment. *Tactile*—that can be touched or felt. *A disadvantage of the rhetorical style.........understood*—one defect of the artificial high flown style is that

too much reliance on the musical effect of words to please the ear, ignoring the other senses, of sight and touch, is that a dislocation takes place, in the sense that while enjoying the sound one is unable to grasp the meaning which is made difficult to appreciate or at least leaves no effect upon the reader untill he understands it fully. *Periods*—complete sentences. *Now Shakespeare......... present*—One may read Shakespeare or Dante over and over again and in every reading one will enjoy the auditory as well as the visual imagery. *Core*—heart; the inner part of a thing. *Penetrated to*—thoroughly understood. *Maze*—place full of intricate windings; confusion of thought. *Repellent*—driving back; unattractive. *Book of Genesis*—that part of the Scriptures which deals with the Creation upto the death of Joseph. *Levity*—thoughtlessness ; vanity.

Marlowe—Christopher Marlowe (1564—1593), one of the greatest of Elizebethan dramatists. His principal plays are, *Dr Faustus, Tamberlaine the great, Edward II* and *The Jew of Malta*. He was killed in a tavern brawl at Deptford. *Lycidas*—a friend of Milton who was unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas in 1637. Milton in this ode mourus the death of his dear friend and foretells the ruin of the corrupted clergy then in their height. *Hebrides*—or Western Isles of Scot. name of several small islands. *Whelming*—submerging; destroying. *Monstrous world*—horrible world below. *Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides etc.*—(Lines 156 to 162 from Lycidas) Mourning the death of his friend Lycidas who was drowned in the sea, Milton says that he did not know whether his friend was lying beneath the stormy waves of the sea near the Hebrides, visiting the horrible under world, or was sleeping by the side of the fabulons Bellerus, with no one to weep for him, where the mountain overlooks the sea towards Namancos and fort Bayona.

Appraise—to set a price on ; to evaluate. *Comprehensive*—extensive, complete. *Exalted*—elevated ; high.

Tentative—not conclusive ; conjectural. *Isolate*—to datach; to separate.

Pertinently—being to the point. *Superbly*—excellently.

MILTON II

Temerity—rashness. *Rectified*—corrected. *Prejudices*—opinions formed without due examination of facts ; bias. *To phrase*—to express in words. *Impelled*—forced. *Conciet*—over-estimate of one's self. *Champions of Milton*—the admirers of Milton. *I am aware.........predecessors*—I am conscious of the fact that being neither a scholar nor a teacher the only reason why I can draw your attention to what I say about Milton or any other great poet is your desire to know what a poet of your own time has to say about the poets that have preceded him.

Practitioner—one who writes poetry. *Should supplement each other's work*—should cooperate to increase each other's knowledge. *Destitute*—Deprived of ; wanting in. *Orientation*—object in view. *Environment*—surroundings. *The temper of the age*—the disposition of the people of the time in relation to literary matters. *Intellectual formation*—development of his thinking faculty. *Moulded him*—developed his mind in a particular direction. *Still unwritten*—i.e. to be written in future. *Where we......respect*—what aspects of the poet or poetry we should admire or respect. *Active*—full of life ; effective. *If I have any critical pretensions*—if I can at all be called a critic. *Comprehensive essay*—an exhaustive treatment. *Prolegomenon*—introduction. *Comus*—a famous poetical drama of Milton. *Communicating it to*—conveying it to. *Solitary*—lonely ; the only one. *A critic sufficiently remote......own*—A critic who has appeared a long time after the poet whose work he criticises is not a suitable person for my inquiry,

It will hardly be......scholar—No one will dispute the fact that the criticism which Johnson has made of Milton's poetry is a criticism of one who was himself a poet and had the experience of the difficulties of writing verse, and not

a mere a scholar. *Vehemently*—passionately, furiously. *Dissented*—disagreed. *Countering*—opposing. *Canons*—rules, standards. *To fall into desuetude*—to become obsolete. *To explore*—to examine thoroughly. *Deter*—hinder; prevent. *Antipathy towards Milton the man*—a dislike of or repugnance to Milton on personal grounds. *Involved with another*—is connected with another prejudice. *Had disengaged the two in his own mind*—had not taken into consideration both the prejudices.

Symbolic figure—a typical figure representing a particular party. *The Civil War is not ended*—in the sense that even today their are opposing political parties as conservatives and liberals just as there were the *royalists* and *Puritans* in the days of the Civil War. *Convulsed*—violently agitated. *Momentous*—of importance; of great consequences. *Of no other poet......entry*—It is very difficult to examine critically Milton's poetry dispassionately, without being influenced knowingly or unknowingly by our own beliefs in religious or political matters which we have ourselves acquired or have inherited from our predecessors. It is not so difficult with other poets. *Emotions*—Violent feelings. *Vesture*—dress; robes. *These emotions......vestures*—these feelings now appear in different shapes. *Grotesque*—ludicrous. *Puritans*—the name originally given to the followers of Calvin in England in the time of Elizabeth I and afterwards applied to dissenting bodies generally, who took sides against the Stuarts (kings of the Stuart dynasty) and High Church party when parliament was in civil conflict. *Unquenched*—not satisfied; not quelled. *Obscure*—make dim. *Eccentric*—odd; not conforming to common rules. *Scandalous*—calling forth condemnation. *Christadelphian*—a member of a small religions body holding conditional immortality, denying a personal devil etc. *Orthodox*—strict in following the established doctrines. *Acquitted of heresy*—absolved of the charge that he opposed the established doctrines of religion. *Assumption*—something assumed or taken for granted.

Strictures—unfavourable criticism; censures. *Reproof*—rebuke, censure, *Critique*—an article in criticism. *Profound*

—deep. *Intemprate*—passionate ; exceeding the usual degree. *Blake*—William Blake (1757—1827), painter, poet and mystic. whose "*Songs of Innocence*" and scriptural drawings reveal an intense spirituality. *Unique*—singular. *Verdict*—opinion ; decision. *Milton's magnificence led nowhere*—Milton inspite of being a great poet did no service to the language. *To pass under......imitate him*—If a poet surrenders to the influence of Milton he necessarily acquires the bad habit of imitating him. *Baffles*—bewilders. *Perspicuous*—clear to the mind; easily understood ; evident. *Constricts*—presses together ; contracts. *Shakespeare baffles......constricts*—By reading Shakespeare the reader is bewildered but his mind is broadened and feels a sort of freedom, by reading Milton, though the reader finds no difficulty in understanding him, yet his vision is narrowed. *Diffidence*—hesitancy ; bashfulness. *Transform*—to change the shape of. *Predicament*—condition ; a difficult situation. *But Mr. Murry......validity*—But it seems to me that Mr. Murry tries to change an occasional unhappy situation in which a poet has fallen at a particular moment into a permanent censure to be true for all times. *Menace*—danger. *Anticipate*—foretell.

Genre—kind ; style. *Epic*—a poem which recounts great events ; a heroic poem. *Blighted by Shakespeare*—could not be popular in the presence of the plays of Shakespeare. *Magnificent fragment*—a beautiful piece of work. *Inevitable*—sure to happen. *Mutation*—change. *In the effort to escape......Shakespeare*—when attempting to free himself from the laborious development of a theme by Shakespeare narrowing down its scope. *Implicitly*—impliedly.

Philosophical critic—a critic who examines a thing from the point of view whether it is rational or not. *Abstruse*—hidden ; difficult to understand. *An incapacity for the abstruse*—not having the ability to understand the deep philosophy. *Appears a good deal more......to struggle*—This passage has been reproduced from the earlier article—Milton I above. *Predict*—foretell.

Mannerisms—a marked peculiarity of style or manner in literary composition. *Emulation*—an attempt to equal or excell another ; rivalry. *Injudicious*—unwise ; imprudent. *We can, of course, show......model itself*—We can prove that when certain writers develop a peculiar style by imitating others they consciously or unconsciously try to excel or improve upon that style, which they cannot. In such cases the censure lies on their unwise selection of a model and not on the model itself. *Repine*—to feel discontent ; to murmur ; to envy. "*Dissociation of sensibility*" —It is a phrase coined by Eliot himself, meaning a separation of various poetic functions, selecting some and ignoring others.

"*Objective correlative*"—another phrase coined by Eliot, meaning "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events." *If such a dissociation.........criticism*—If such a dissociation of sensibility did in fact take place, it must have been due to causes which were very complicated and very deep, with which literary criticism has nothing to do. *Words and concepts fail us*—which we cannot express in words nor can think properly.

What permanent strictures......drawn—What are those censures and charges which have a permanently bad influence upon poetry. *Enduring laws of taste*—such rules of literary taste as do not change speedily. *Condemnation of Comus and Samson*—disapproval of the language and style of *Comus* and *Somson* (*Agonistes*). *Dramatic canons*—rules applicable to dramas. *Condone*—to forgive ; to pass over. *Or to condone.........rhythm*—or if we pass over without challenging Johnson's rejection of the versification of *Lycidas* on special grounds and not merely that it does not follow his own preconceived notions of rhyme. *Diction*—style ; manner of speaking or expressing.

Novelty—peculiarity. *Imputed*—attributed. *Grandeur*—sublimity ; loftiness of thought or deportment. *Sank under him*—was overwhelmed by his rhetoric. *Perverse*—different from what is reasonable or required ; persistent in error. *Pedantic*—displaying knowledge for the sake

of showing, *Without resistance*—without any criticism. *Criticism sinks in admiration*—the reader is so overwhelmed that instead of criticising he begins to admire him. *Tuscan poets*—Italian poets ; poets belonging to Tuscany in Italy. *Spenser*—Edmund Spenser (1552-99), was born in London, educated at Cambridge, and early attracted notice by his poetic effusions. After the publication of his "*Shepherd's Calexder*" he was made known to Queen Elizabeth I and in 1580 received the appoinment of Secretary to the Lord Deputy of Ireland. He wrote the "*Fairie Queen*" his most famous work. *Butler*—Samuel Butler (1612-1680) renowned as the author of "*Hudibras*", one of the wittiest poems in English and one of the most quoted. His last days were spent in poverty, and he was burried in the Church yard of St. Paul's Covent Garden and given a memorial in Westminster Abbey, "that he who was destitute of all things when alive might not want a monument when dead." *Barbarous* — rude ; uncivilized, *Exalted genius*—an intellectual faculty of a very high order. *Extensive*—vast. *Vehicle*—that which is used to convey. *Deformity*—ugliness. *Like other lovers........... deformity*—Like lovers we shut our eyes to its drawbacks and think it beautiful in spite of its ugliness. *Classic style*—a style following an accepted standard. *It is not an elevation of a common style*—It is not an attempt to improve and raise the standard of the common style. *Infinitesimal*—infinitely small. *Transformation*—a change in the form of a thing. *Maximal*—of the highest or maximum value. *Minimal*—of the lowest or minimum value. *Distortion*—twisting.

Idiosyncrasy—peculiarity of temperament or constitution. (Here, a peculiar use of a word or idiom) *Cliche*—hackneyed literary phrase. *There is no cliche......lawlessness*—In Milton's poems there are no hackneyed phrases, the poetic diction too is in no way depreciatory or objectionable, but the arrangement of ideas is so peculiar that it seems to be a permanent violence to language. *Milton's poetry is poetry at the farthest.........prose*—The language used in Milton's poetry is so different from prose that

both seem to be poles asunder ; his prose is so artificial and elaborate that it looks like half-formed poetry and therefore is not good prose.

Condemnatory—that which deserves censure. *Eccentric*—departing from the centre ; not conforming to common rules. *As a poet.........eccentrics*—As a poet Milton has so often violated the accepted rules of language that he can be said to be the greatest among those poets who disregard common rules. *Affinity*—nearness of kin, agreement or resemblance *Negative rules*—rules showing what things are not to be done. *Racine*-Jean Racine (1639-1699) a distinguished French tragic dramatist. *Chaucer*—Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400), acquired immortality by his *Canterbury Tales*, giving a most graphic description of the life and characters of his time. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Inerrancy—not deviating from the standard he had set for himself. *Expatiate*—to enlarge in discourse, argument or writing, to dwell at length. *Intuitive*—of, possessing, perceived by, intuition *i. e.* the immediate apprehension by the mind without reasoning. *Arrested*—stopped ; hindered. *Affectionate*—sympathetic. *Types*—models. *Prototypes*-the first or original types or modeles from which anything is copied. *Abjection*—meanness. *They have the general characteristics......discendents*—Adam and Eve are not like an ordinary man or woman, but they have certain characteristics by which they can be recognized as such, in as much as they were liable to temptation which brought about their fall from heaven, and were conscious of original virtues, and their descendants bore mean or noble characters. *Mortal*—one who dies ; man. *Moloch*—Phoenician god to which human sacrifices were offered. *Belial*—name of a devil *Mammon*—god of riches. In *Paradise Lost*—(Book II) all the three are shown as fallen angels, When after their eviction from Heaven Satan seeks the advice of his council as to what is to be done next to regain their lost position, Moloch advices "open war" with Almighty and utter defiance of his Authority ; Belial

"Counselled ignoble ease and peaceful sloth. Not peace ;" and Mammon advises peace so that in safety they may best compose their present evils to gain time. *Infernal powers*—powers ruling the Hell, (Satan and his subordinates). *Manipulator*—one who works with the hand, (here, writer or poet).

The effect of his blindness......present—The effect of Milton's blindness does not seem to have disabled him altogether, but had strengthened his other senses. *Recurrent*—which occurs again and again. *Propensity*—leaning; inclination of mind. *Abysmal*—bottomless. *Isolated*—separated. *Depicts*—describes. *Phantasmagory*—shifting scene of real or imagined figures. *Arch-fiend*—Satan. "*Chained on the burning lake*"—chained in Hell. *Vivid*—clear. *Flora*—flowers. *Fauna*—animals. *Assimilated*—made to look like.

Blurred—dimmed, blemished. *Apprehension*—ability to understand. *Make this peculiar demand......apprehension*—requires us to re-adjust over senses in such a way that we pay more attention to our hearing power than our sight. *Rambler*—a literary journal in the days of Johnson, *Treatise*—a formal essay ; a booklet. *Robert Bridges*—(1844-1930), appointed poet laureate after the death of Alfred Austin in 1913. Practised medicine up to 1882, thence forward devoted himself mainly to literature. He published several volumes of poems and plays. His *Treatnent of Beauty* was published in 1930, *Catalogues*—gives a detail of. *Refractory*—unruly ; unmanageable ; perverse. *Milton's Verse......single line*—Milton's verse has this characteristic that it can not be properly appreciated if we examine it line by line. *It is the period...... structure*—In order to appreciate it we have to take the entire paragraph or the complete sentence of Milton's verse ; a minimum of attention is required on single lines, because the period structure is substituted for the line structure. *Pattern*—model.

Token—sign ; mark. *Heroic lines*—rhymed lines in couplets. *Artifice* device. *Declaimer*—rhetorical

speech;a prepared speech in high flown language. *The variety of pauses......declaimer*—The admirers of blank verse boast that the variety of pauses lends a beautiful colour to the verse. But in fact it does not, it merely changes the verse to prepared rhetorical speech. *Free verse*—blank verse. *Inspiration*—intuitive knowledge.

Flexibility—elasticity. *Nor did the nineteenth century ......ridiculous*—In the nineteenth century the poets could not, in spite of efforts, develop the blank verse to such an extent that it might be able to convey, in the ordinary colloquial speech, the topics of every day life ; so when our poets fail to reach the desired excellence they often fall down to the level of writing ridiculous poetry. *Detractions*—depreciations. *Juncture*—period. *Excellences*—beauties. *To escape from .....speech*—to avoid the old poetic of language which had from the point of view of current speech become obsolete. *Metric*—metre. *Exalt*—praise highly. *Stimulation*—encouragement. *Critical pronouncements*—remarks by way of criticism.

Donne—John Donne (1573-1631) a clergyman and religious writer whose poems are still held in esteem. *Peevishness*—ill nature ; a state of being easily annoyed. *Consummate*—supreme ; perfect. *Milton's diction...currency*—Milton's style is not a style which has become obsolete. *Debased currency*—the currency which being of inferior value is not a legal tender. *Inimitable*—which cannot be imitated.*Tenet*—a principle or doctrine which a man holds true. *Verse should......prose*—verse should follow the common colloquial language like prose. *Diction should become .. ..speech*—the poetic style should be similar to the style of the developed current speech. *Before...... poetry*—before it can hope to be rasied to the level of poetry. *That we were to seek......poetry*—that we should select such topics as do not seem to be poetical enough and make use of such material as is difficult to be moulded into verse.

Obligations—duties functions. *Progressive deterioration*—continual and gradual worsening of the language.

Elaborate—done with fulness and exactness; highly finished *Servitude*—state of slavish dependence. *Jargon*—slang, confused talk. *Equipment*—outfit, things used in equipping or furnishing.

Outside the theatre—i. e. among the non-dramatic poets. *Justified irregularity*—irregularity which was justified according to the needs of the occasion. *That the verse......measure—In Paradise Lost* the metre of the lines is sometimes in accordance with the required measure and sometimes not ; but by this departure to and return from the regular measure, the verse gets more life and force. *Monotony*—dull uniformity of tone or sound. *Unscannable verse*—verse whose lines cannot be measured according to the rules of scanning. *Fatigues*— tires wearies out.

———

QUESTION AND ANSWERS

Q. "The most important fact abouc Milton, for my purpose, is his blindness." How does Milton's blindness affect his poetry?

Ans. Milton's blindness is an important fact because it has affected his poetry in several ways. In some ways it has affected it adversely, in other ways it has not. To go blind in the middle of life is itself not enough to determine the whole of his poetry. Had he been a man of very keen senses, *all the five* senses,his blindness would not have mattered much. But, as it was, his other senses too were much weakened early by book-learning and so blindness did matter a great deal. It may be remembered here that his most important works, such as *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* were written when he had lost his eyesight.

One way in which blindness affected Milton's style was that his visual imagination naturally became weak, so that he was unable to exercise his visual imagination in any great degree and could not draw vivid pictures of what can be seen and touched. In Shakespeare visual imagery is so perfect and clear that we feel as if we are ourselves seeing the things themselves. Milton does not and cannot give such details. His imagery is all general, e.g. in the following from L Allegro.

While the ploughman near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land.
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale,
Under the hawthorn in the shade.

In these lines we cannot visualise any particular ploughman, milkmaid or shepherd. Every ploughman etc, would serve as good as any other. It is for this reason that Milton is at his best in presenting the imagery suggestive of vast size, limitless space, abysmal depth and light and darkness which do not require minute details.

In other respects "blindness" turns out to be not merely a negligible defect but a positive *virtue*. In his most important work *Paradise Lost*, no theme and no setting other than that which he chose could have given him such scope for the kind of imagery in which he excelled because it made no demand upon the powers of visual imagination which were defective in him. If he had drawn a detailed and vivid picture of Paradise with its flowers and animals it would have looked like earth and would not be Paradise. Similarly a higher degree of characterization of Adam and Eve would not be suitable. Adam and Eve are not a man and woman such as we know, if they were, they would not be Adam and Eve. They are not types but prototypes, the Original *Man* and *Woman*. Similarly a general description of Paradise and "Twilit Hell" has a charm of its own which could not be enhanced by more detail. Thus it is that one finds more pleasure in reading those passages of *Paradise Lost* where there is least to visualize.

Q. "This is a prejudice which I share myself : an antipathy towards Milton the man. Explain and elucidate.

Ans. Milton's personality had little to commend. As a man he was antipathetic, and unsociable. His blindness might have had something to do with it. From the point of view of a moralist or a psycholgist or a political philosopher or a theologian his views were hardly shared by any party. He took sides in the Civil War of the seventeenth century between King Charles I and those who desired drastic reforms in the government. It is not clear which side he supported. Mr. Wilson Knight agreed that he was more a monarchist than a republican. Some others have attempted to prove that he belonged to no party, but

disagreed with everyone, and thus made himself unlikeable to all. From the religious point of view his theology was highly eccentric. It was scandalous to Protestants as much as to Catholics. It was also hinted that he was a sort of Christadelphian and held his own views on important religious matters, though perhaps he was not a very orthodox Christadelphian either. Mr. C. S. Lewis a man of orthodox religious views, has opposed the charge of heresy against Milton saying that on reading his *Paradise Lost* one should be covinced that he was not a heretic. From the psychological point of view he was equally unsatisfactory. His unsociable nature kept him aloof from other human beings except those very near to him. Hence he had little interest in or understanding of, individual human beings, which was a sort of handicap to his poetry.

Q. What is the view of Samuel Johnson about Milton and his poetry? How would you meet his criticism in light of T. S. Eliot's observations in his *Milton* ?

Ans. Samuel Johnson has written an essay on Milton's versification which was published in the *Rambler* of 12th January 1751 and also a *Life of Milton*. In his time he was the most prominent literary figure in England and wa s himself a good poet. Therefore, what he has written about Milton, even if it has been dissented from cannot be lightly dismissed, but deserves to be read with respect. In his own day Johnson was very much a modern and has examined Milton's poetry from the point of view of: "How should poetry be written now? and. what place does the answer to this question give to Milton? It may here be borne in mind that the answers to these questions may be very different now from those that were correct in his days.

Now Milton was unfortunately a victim of certain prejudices. One such prejudice is found on every page of Johnson's *Life of Milton* and it is a general one· Viz an antipathy towards Milton the man. This was due to Milton's queer habits and the fact that he was himself antipathetic. It

seems to have been strengthened by the part Milton played in the Civil War of the seventeenth century, between King Charles I and the parliamentarians, though it is not clear to which party he belonged. Attempts were made to prove that he belonged to no party and disagreed with every one. His religious views were also eccentric. If Milton's poetry was affected by his political or religious views those who read it with a critical eye could not have done so dispassionately without importing their own views consciously or unconsciously. While examining poetry for poetry's sake we will have to be on guard against such prejudices.

Johnson's objections against Milton's poetry can be summed up as under:

1. In all his greater works Milton's *diction* has a peculiarity in the sense that it does not resemble to that of any former writer and is far removed from common use so that an unlearned reader finds himself surprised by a new language.

2. Both in prose and verse he had formed a style by a perverse and pedantic principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. His prose was generally condemned whereas his poetry, owing to its great power, was admired without criticism.

3. Milton's style was not *modified* by his subject. What is shown with greater detail in *Paradis Lost* may be found in *Comus*. Being familiar with Italian poets he was inclined to use Italian words, as also the words of other languages. It may be said that he wrote no language but a Babylonish *dialect* which he had by his exalted genius and extensive learning made a vehicle of so much instruction and pleasure as to appear graceful in spite of deformity.

Now this criticism seems substantially true, But it does not detract, any thing from Milton's greatness ; it enhances it. His style is not a *classic* style, in that it is not the elevation of a *common style*, by the final touch of

genius, to greatness. It is purely a personal style, not based on common speech or common prose. True, Milton committed many irregularities, such as distortion of a construction, the use of foreign idiom, the use of a word in a foreign way. True, that his poetry is poetry at the farthest remove from prose. But the remoteness of his verse from ordinary speech as well as his invention of his own poetic language seems to be one of the marks of his greatness. Other marks are his sense of structure, and his inerrancy conscious, or unconscious, in writing so as to make the best display of his talents and the best concealment of his weaknesses. His deviations from the ordinary rules of the language have in no way derogated his poetic diction. As a poet Milton seems to be the greatest of all eccentrics ; he followed no rules of good writing, but those of his own making. As to the similarity of style in all his great works it may be said that it was largely due to his defective vision. He selected themes and settings in which he could excel as in *Paradise Lost*, where there was less demand upon his powers of visual imagination.

In his essay in the *Rambler*, Johnson has criticised Milton's versification as well, but the charges are not very serious. To say that he used unrhymed verse is no charge at all. Blank verse had been freely and successfully used by Shakespeare and others in dramatic poetry and Johnson himself had admitted that he could not wish that Milton had been a rhymer. Milton had perfected non-dramatic blank verse with a consummate skill to exploit its greatest musical possibilities. In Milton the emphasis on the line structure is the minimum. His verse is not formed in this way. It is the period, the sentence, and still more the paragraph that is the unit of his verse. It is his ability to give a perfect and unique pattern [illegible] very paragraph so that the beauty of the line is foun[illegible] context, and a great musical effect is produced. [illegible] also the most conclusive evidence of Milton's [illegible] mastery.

The books available at Present

I	1.	*Chaucer*	: The Prologue	2.50
	2.	*Spenser*	: The Faerie Queene Book 1 Canto 1	4.50
		Do	: Apithalamion & Prothalamion	2 50
	3.	*Milton*	: Paradise Lost Book I	2.50
	4.	*Bashir Hussain*	: Guide to Pardise Lost I	1.50
	5.	*Milton*	: Paradise Lost Book II	3.50
	6.	*Milton*	: Lycidas	2.50
	7.	*Pope*	: The Rape of the Lock	2.00
	8.	*B.R. Mullik*	: Pope	1.50
II	9.	*Marlowe*	: Doctor Faustus	3.50
	10.	*Shakespeare*	: Hamlet	6.25
	11.	*Shakespeare*	: Tempest *by Ali Arif*	3.75
	12.	*Shakespeare*	: King Lear (*B.R. Mullik*)	1.50
	13.	*Shakespeare*	: Twelfth Night (*B.R. Mullik*)	1.50
	14.	*Shakespeare*	: Tempest (*B.R. Mullik*)	1.50
	15.	*Ben Jonson*	: Everyman in his Humour	3.00
	16.	*Fielding*	: Guide to Joseph Andrews	3.50
	17.	*B.R. Mullik*	: Fielding	2.00
III	18.	*J. Austin*	: Emma (*B.R. Mullik*)	1.50
	19.	*Dickens*	: Great Expectation (Text)	5.00
	20.	*G. Eliot*	: Adam Bede (*B.R. Mullik*)	1.50
IV	21.	*Wordsworth*	: The Prelude	5.00
	22.	*Shelley*	: Adonais	2.50
	23.	*Keats*	: Five Odes	2.50
	24.	*Browning*	: Andrea Del Sarto	2.00
	25.	*M. Arnold*	: Thyrsis	2.00
	26.	*B.R Mullik*	: Matthew Arnold as a poet	1.50
V	27.	*Bacon*	: Bacon's Essays	8.00
	28.	*Swift*	: Gulliver's Travels (I & II)	2.50
	29.	*Carlyle*	: Sartor Resartus	7.50
	30.	*Mill*	: Guide to Mill On Liberty	2.00
	31.	*Ruskin*	: The Crown of Wild Olive	7.00
VI	32.	*Aristotle*	: The Poetics	7.50
	33.	*Dryden*	: An Essay of Dramatic Poesy	3.00
	34.	*Arnold*	: The Function of Criticism & The Study of Poetry	4.00
	35.	*Pater*	: Appreciations	4.00
	36.	*T.S. Eliot*	: Tradition and the Individual Talent (*Milton I & II*)	3.00
	37.	*Goodman*	: Practical Criticism	5.00

The remaining books are shortly coming